Chapter Twelve

SACRED SITES AND OBSERVANCES

It is worthwhile, at the outset, to come to some understanding of what American Indian people mean when they refer to a place as sacred or talk about its spirituality. Recognizing that these meanings vary from one culture to another, even among the tribal nations who historically occupied the Black Hills, attention will be focused here on the Lakotas and the Cheyennes since these are the two tribal nations whose people have had the strongest and most lasting attachments to the Black Hills and the area of Wind Cave National Park, at least as reported in published sources. Given their close relations with the Lakotas and Cheyennes, the Arapahos probably have ongoing religious connections to this area as well, but none of these have been recorded in the published sources that we reviewed. Some of what constitutes the sacred in relationship to landscapes and observances has already been mentioned in previous discussions of animals, plants, and minerals. This chapter serves as a bridge, carrying forward certain ideas introduced previously and looking at how they are manifested in relation to particular kinds of sacred landforms and spiritual observances. Even though a certain amount of repetition of previously presented material is necessary in order to make this link, the focus and context of its presentation are new.

I. SACRED LANDFORMS AND LANDSCAPES

Much about what is sacred for American Indian people is integrally related to and manifested in geographic landscapes. Rich Two Dogs (in Parlow 1983a:3), a contemporary Lakota spiritual leader, once said: "The religion is rooted to the land. And you can't have the religion by itself, without the land." In many American Indian religious traditions, the sacred is present in landforms, sometimes called *owanka wakan* [holy places] (Howard 1954:73), places that both embody and stand for significant cosmic or spiritual personages, powers, and processes. As Keith Basso (1996), an ethnographer of western Apache culture, describes it, "wisdom sits in places." Or as the Lakota intellectual Thomas Tyon told James Walker (1980:119) in the late nineteenth century, spirits belong to "places." In scores of accounts on the Lakotas, Cheyennes, and other tribal nations, we find examples of how landforms act in mnemonic ways – embodying, preserving, codifying, and immortalizing basic cosmological precepts (Basso 1996:105-150; Schlesier 1987:4-6; Kelly and Francis 1994:41; Irwin 1994:29).

As is the case with animals, plants, and other natural phenomena in Lakota and Cheyenne traditions, landforms are alive. They possess a living presence, a consciousness that humans can approach and come to know especially through dreams and visions (Irwin 1994:31). A landform's spiritual presence manifests itself in myriad ways, which are best understood and expressed through metaphor (New Holy 1997:79-85). Art, poetry, music, performance, and narrative are the primary mediums through which the meanings behind a landscape and its landforms are experienced and communicated in the tribal cultures of the Great Plains (New Holy 1997:185-186). Landscapes and landforms are comprehended in terms of the totality of their being, their implicit unity and relatedness to one another, and to other natural phenomena that surround them (Irwin 1994:27-29). In Lakota cosmology, as one example, Harney Peak, the Thunders, blacktail deer, swallows, horses, butterflies, cedar, and the West Wind form a synergistic set, a synecdoche, in which each phenomenon stands and speaks for the other as interchangeable representations of a

single spiritual essence or force. Notwithstanding their seemingly distinct physical appearances, they share a common underlying origin and purpose in the cosmic scheme of things. This way of comprehending the world does not rest on a materially based, empirically rationalized approach -- the stuff of scientific discourse. Rather, it involves a figurative, analogical perspective where one form easily enfolds into another, readily expresses another, and finally, can be transformed into the other (Jahner 1989:193-202; Irwin 1994:27; New Holy 1997).

In the ethnogeographies of many American Indian nations, individual landforms are rarely isolated, existing unto themselves and separated from other places in the larger landscapes they occupy. Instead, sites of spiritual significance tend to be interrelated, integrated, and connected to each other through the progression of events in a story cycle or as sites visited in a sequence of activities associated with the performance of ritual observances in a ceremonial cycle (Kelly and Francis 1994:44; Sundstrom, L. 1996). Landscapes in a tribal territory chart or identify the particular locales where certain spiritual figures dwell, where mysterious happenings unfold, where specific knowledge is given, and/or where ceremonial observances are performed (Parks and Wedel 1985). These sometimes take the form of a cosmic map, in which subterranean, earthly, and celestial formations are tied together in a unified vision of the universe and its life-giving processes (Goodman 1992; Carmichael 1994; Theodatus and La Pena 1994:22).

A. Types of Land Forms

In their now classic and pioneering work on the historic and sacred geography of the Pawnee, Douglas Parks and Waldo Wedel (1985:167) review some of the sources that report sites of sacred significance to American Indians in the Great Plains. Their review suggests any one of the following landforms as a candidate for a holy place. First, prominent eminences, especially buttes or mountains, are commonly described as sites for ceremonial observances involving fasting and vision seeking. They report that most tribes in the region single out specific mountains or buttes for worship. Sometimes the sacredness of a particular elevated location is unique to a single tribe, but in other cases, the sight has spiritual significance for many tribal nations. Bear Lodge Butte a.k.a. Devil's Tower, for example, is one of these (Parks and Wedel 1985:169-170). Parks and Wedel (1985:170-171) also note that distinctive bodies of water, certain lakes, river locations, artesian springs and geysers, unusual rock formations, and locations of petroglyphs are considered holy places. To this, caves and other unique underground depressions can be added, as these certainly characterize some of the sites that tribal nations in the region regard as spiritually important. Most of these kinds of landforms are revered by tribal nations from other parts of the United States as well (Carmichael 1994:91-95; Mohs 1994:192-198; Theodatus and La Pena 1994:22-26; Hall 1997).

There are two ways landforms can be discussed. One way is to look at them generically as constituting a topographical class or category, in which all representatives of the type share certain features in common. Another way is to study them concretely as representing specific sites associated with particular cultural representations. Here consideration is given to some of the generic ideas associated with various kinds of landforms; the discussion of particular locales is presented in Chapters Thirteen and Fourteen.

1. Mountains and Buttes

High elevation locations or prominent eminences are commonly recognized as places where the tribal nations of the Great Plains gained their spiritual gifts and knowledge (Donaldson in

Krause and Olson 1974:64; Parks and Wedel, 1985:169-170; Irwin 1994:36,122). John Moore (1996:212) writes in relation to the Cheyennes:

> Human beings can plug into the system of cosmic energy at any level, and although there is more energy to be gained by plugging in at higher levels, it is more difficult, and more dangerous. To receive energy directly from the source, one can pray directly to *Maheo*, or fast on a mountaintop or hilltop, closer to the zenith.

Many high places were used by the Cheyennes to fast, pray, and seek visions because these were connected to powerful bird and insect figures who carried messages between humans and the "Above Persons" in the "World Above," *Heamahestanov*, or in the Blue Sky, *Otatavoom*, the home of *Ma'heo*, the greatest spiritual presence in the Cheyennes' universe (Curtis 1907-30:6:123; Powell 1969:2:435, 437; Moore, J. 1986:178-179; Schlesier 1987:4-6). Certain eminences,[1] especially Bear Butte, were the sites where the Cheyennes typically fasted, prayed, and sought spiritual revelations (Odell 1942:17-18; Moore, J. 1996:178-179). Bear Butte was also the mountain where the Cheyennes acquired some of their most sacred knowledge and covenants, including the Sacred Arrows (Schlesier 1987:4-6).

Among the Lakotas, mountains and prominent buttes are also associated with transcendent spaces that exist above and beyond the more ordinary life of the world that stands below them (Forbes-Boyte 1999:28). The tops of high mountains and buttes are the locations where Lakotas typically fast, pray, and seek visions (Fire and Erdoes 1978:1 4-16; Sword in Walker 1980:85; Tyon, Garnett, Thunder Bear, and Sword in Walker 1980:105; Thunder Bear in Walker 1980:129, 131, 132; Tyon in Walker 1980:151; Feraca 1998:24; Forbes-Boyte 1996:104-106). Eminences in the Black Hills and its surrounding environs, including Bear Butte, Bear Lodge Butte, Harney Peak, and Mount Coolidge, are among many locations reported in the literature where Lakotas received spiritual guidance (Sage in Haflen and Haflen 1956:268-272; Odell 1942:21-30; Fools Crow in Mails 1972:86-87, 95, 102, 109, 149, 151, 169-171, 181-184; LaPointe 1976:80-84; Black Elk in DeMallie 1984:46, 98, 133-135, 141, 230, 253, 258-259; Young Bear and Theisz 1994:19; Forbes-Boyte 1999:28). Each of these places is associated with a spiritual presence, and generally, when guidance is sought from a particular spirit, people go to the places with which it is associated. As with the Cheyennes, high places are preferred by the Lakotas because they bring people into closer contact with *Tunkan'sila*, [Grandfather] or *Taku Skanskan*, who is associated with the highest sky spaces and the Four Winds and the different birds and insects that serve as their principal messengers (Walker 1983:321, 327).

In reference to the entire Plains, Lee Irwin (1994:106) writes that certain eminences were widely recognized as especially sacred places because they encompassed different strata of the universe. Among all the high places in their territorial ranges, some of the most significant are the ones that also contained openings to the underworld through caves and springs. The Medicine Wheel Mountain in the Big Horns (Liebman 2002:61-72) conforms to this, and Bear Butte in certainly fits this too. Just as the Lakotas believe that animals and plants crossing different planes of the universe are highly sacred, so they place landforms connecting the sky, earth, and underworld in high regard. In relation to Bear Butte, Kari Forbes-Boyte (1996:104, 1999:28) argues that Bear Butte is revered not only because it contains all of the sacred elements (land air, water, rocks, animals, plants, and fire), but also because it forms an *axis mundi* that connects

[1] Mountains and hills were known by many different names in the Cheyenne language. *Eseom* refers to an extended ridge (Petter 1913-15:547), as opposed to a simple elevation of ground which is called *zepomao*. A mountain is known as *hohona*, or *eseheoomeno* for a range of mountains (Petter 1913-15:722).

earth and sky spaces. Karl Schlesier (1987:4-6) presents a nearly identical case for the sacred importance of Bear Butte to the Cheyennes. Bear Butte and other eminences in and around the Black Hills, are understood not only to be sites of revelation and prophesy but earth centers, places where the forces of the universe coalesce in powerful and energizing ways (Deloria, V. Jr. and Stoffle 1998:12-13).

2. Caves

Throughout Native North America, caves are certainly understood as earth centers, places where the souls of humans and animals undergo a metamorphosis from their immaterial spiritualized selves to their physical forms (Carmichael 1992:92-93; Theodoratus and LaPena 1994:23-24; Hall 1997:99). This is an old idea that is connected, more specifically, with the process in which the soul or spiritual essence of being is attached to a physical form through the creation of "breath" (Hall 1997:99-101).

In the Lakota language, caves are known as *mako hloka* [a hole in the ground] (Buechel 1970:331) or *washun*, which refers to a hole but especially the den of an animal (Ibid:553). Among Lakotas, they are often described as birthing chambers or wombs, the places where the spirit forms of animals live and from which they emerge to populate the earth. In the 1870s, James Bourke described a cave near Bear Lodge Butte (a.k.a. Devil's Tower) from which the Lakotas believed animals emerged (Sundstrom, L. 1997:192), and a half-century later, in 1937, Dick Stone (1982:20) heard about the same cave from his Lakota advisors. In 1874, N. H. Knappen (in Krause and Olson 1974:19), a correspondent for the Bismark Tribune, described Ludlow Cave as "the home of the great spirit," where animals of all kinds existed "in a translated state." Ludlow Cave in the Cave Hills of northwestern South Dakota is particularly interesting because many of the ideas associated with Wind Cave also appear here, including the presence of an old man of gigantic stature and stories of animal emergence (Sioux Ranger District 2003:60-73). At Ludlow Cave, a bison cow with her newborn calf is represented in a large bas-relief carving located on the cliffs above the cave entrance (Sundstrom 2002:110).

The Lakotas associate caves with bison. Bison are understood as a gift to the Lakota from *Inyan* [Stone], whose natural domain is the mountains (Walker 1917:82), and whose home, or *tipi*, is located in the earth (Little Wound in Walker 1980:124). According to some of the spiritually knowledgeable men that Walker (1980:118) interviewed, *Inyan* "knows all things of the earth...He can tell where the herds of buffalo are. They have gone back into the earth." In an account told by Short Bull to Walker (1980:144):

> Buffalo were given by the spirit of the earth to the Indians. The spirit of the earth and the buffalo are the same. The Oglalas should venerate the Spirit of the Buffalo. An Indian went into a hole in the ground and found the buffalo. They were given to him for his food. He drove some of them up on the earth. From these came all the buffalo.

At the end of the nineteenth century, George Bushotter (in Dorsey 1894:476-477) elaborated on the notion that bison come from the subterranean world:

> The buffalo originated under the earth. It is said that in the olden times, a man who was journeying came to a hill where there were many holes in the ground. He explored them, and when he had gone within one of them, he found plenty of buffalo chips, and buffalo tracks were on all sides; and here and there he found buffalo hair which had come out when the animals rubbed against the walls. These animals were the real buffalo, who dwelt

> underground, and some of them came up to this earth and increased here to many herds. These buffalo had many earth lodges, and there they raised their children...[2]

More recently, a similar account was given to Raymond Bucko (1999:204-205) by one of his Lakota consultants, who said:

> The buffalo skull represents all the beings of the earth that are not human, the four-legged. The buffalo skull represents all of life on the earth that passed already. The feather represents all the birds. This is really what the sweat is all about; this is going back to creation, all these animals and birds. A long time ago *hukáka wóglake* the 'old fables', *hukákiya* 'the ancient ancestors', the people lived in the earth long ago, guided by rock spirits. They had no sight, as it was completely dark. All the animals lived there too. When the people came out of the earth, a scout saw a hole with light coming in. It was too bright for him, but then he got used to the light and looked around and saw a country, saw the sun and the earth. He wandered the earth for a while and then went back in. It took time to get used to the earth. There were no living things on the earth. The scout told the buffalos and the people about it. The buffalos were greedy, so they went charging out. The scout said to go slow because the light will hurt your eyes. The buffalos came anyway, and that is why the buffalo are blind. When they first came out of the earth, the Great Spirit gave them fire. This was his gift to the people. That's kind of a creation story.

This represents a modern version of the long-standing belief among the Lakotas that humans and bison share a common origin in the earth, particularly in caves, which are closely connected to the life-giving and regenerative properties of stone and grandmother earth (Melody 1977: 152-164).

Like the Lakotas, the Cheyennes believe that bison originate in the underworld and return to the prairies every spring from their subterranean habitats. In 1883, Lt. Colonel Richard I. Dodge in his book *Our Wild Indians,* (1959:289) wrote that the Arapahos, Cheyennes, and other Indians held the firm belief "that the buffalo were produced in countless numbers in a country under the ground; that every spring the surplus, swarmed like bees from a hive, out of great cave-like openings to this country." In Cheyenne traditions, bison and many other mammalian species are believed to originate in subterranean sanctuaries in the depths of the earth (Moore, J. 1974:163, 165; Moore, J. 1984:296, 1996:211). In their cavern homes, mammals exist in a spiritualized form, awaiting their materialization on the earth's surface (Schlesier 1987:4-5). The Cheyennes believe that animals and humans receive "the immortal gift of breath" from the earth (Schlesier 1987:9). They specifically link the underworld of Bear Butte with the *maheonoxsz*, the sacred caves and homes of their holiest spirits, the *maiyun* (Schlesier 1987:4-6). The *Maiyun*, the messengers of the *Ma'heyuno* or the Four Directions, have spiritual and material forms (Schlesier 1987:8); they hold positions in the sky, but they also occupy sacred caves on earth where they once imparted their sacred knowledge to the Cheyennes' two prophets, Sweet Medicine and Stands on the Ground or Erect Horns (Dorsey, G. 1905:48; Grinnell 1926:274). At these locations, they guard and take care of the homes of the animals whose spirits, *hematasoomao*, dwell in other caverns, known as *heszevoxsz*, under the earth. Many of these caves are found in the Black Hills (Schlesier 1987:4-7). The Cheyennes also call caves by other names, such as

[2] Without identifying its origin, the same story was rephrased and published by Katherine Judson (1913:53) as follows: "In the days of the grandfathers, buffalo lived under the earth. In the olden times, they say, a man who was journeying came to a hill where there were many holes in the ground. He entered one of them. When he had gone inside he found buffalo chips and buffalo tracks on all sides. He found also buffalo hairs where the buffaloes had rubbed against the walls. These were the real buffaloes and they lived under the ground. Afterwards some of them came to the surface of the earth and lived there. Then the herds on the earth increased."

evoxeve [a hole in the ground] (Petter 1913-15:281), or in the modern dialect of the northern Cheyenne, tse*vé?evótoo?e*, which is the word for an ordinary hole or anything that is concave (English-Cheyenne Dictionary 1976:19).

The idea that caves are the origin homes of bison and other game was also shared by other tribal nations in the northern Plains, including the Arapahos, Arikaras, Hidatsas, Mandans, and Poncas (Dorsey, J. 1890; Kroeber 1902; Dorsey and Kroeber 1903; Bowers 1950, 1963; Parks 1996). Indeed, many Lakota and Cheyenne understandings about caves and their connections to animal homes are very similar, and in some instances nearly identical, to Arapaho, Arikara, Hidatsa, Mandan, and Ponca beliefs.

Since caves are located inside the earth, they are generally associated with a female spiritual presence. The Cheyennes believe that the nadir of the world is the home of a female generative principle *He?estostse*, the source of the material world (Moore, J. 1996:208-211). Most tribal nations in the Plains feminized the earth and the cavernous underworld homes in which animals originated. The deepest levels of the earth are often addressed as Grandmother Earth, *Maka unçi* in Lakota (Black Elk in DeMallie 1984:312), Old Woman Under the Ground, *Gadombitsonhit* in Kiowa (Mooney 1979:239), or Our Grandmother, *Esceheman* in Cheyenne (Powell 1969:2:437; Schlesier 1987:5, 8, 82). Among the Cheyennes, Grandmother Earth is one of the four most powerful *maiyun* or spiritual potencies in their universe; from her subterranean abode, she protects the animals and governs their appearance on earth (Grinnell 1910:567; Schlesier 1987:8). In Lakota traditions, she is one of the four most powerful *Tobtob*, and caves are often the sites where encounters with her or other mysterious old women, such as *Wakanka*, take place (Sage in Haflen and Haflen 1956:268-272; Erdoes and Ortiz 1984:483-484; Sundstrom, L. 2002:106).

The earth grandmother of the Cheyennes is the progenitor of another female figure, whose home is also a cave under the earth, and her name is *Ehyophstah* [Yellow Hair on Top Woman] (Schlesier 1987:78). In the stories of many different tribes in the Plains, she appears as a bison woman who becomes the companion of a human man and brings the bison to his people from her subterranean world. There are a number of different versions of these narratives among the Cheyennes (Kroeber 1900:173-196; Grinnell 1907, 1926:244-251; Schlesier 1987:76-79; Stands in Timber and Liberty 1967:19-22; Powell 1969:2:472-475) and the Lakotas (Left Heron in Walker 1917:183-190, 212-215, 1983:109-118; Deloria, E. 1978:86-89; LaPointe 1976:79-84). In both tribes, the narratives represent a concatenation of two storytelling traditions, the Buffalo and Corn (or Rush) woman tale and the Buffalo Wife story (Parks 1996: 153-154), variants of which are also found among the Arapahos (Dorsey and Kroeber 1903:388-418), the Arikaras (Curtis 1907-30:5:93-100; Dorsey G. 1904:35-37, 124-25; Parks 1996:153-165), the Crows (Lowie 1918:107-119), the Hidatsas (Beckwith 1937:63-76), the Mandans (Libby 1910:694-707; Beck-with, M. 1937:166-170), and the Poncas (Dorsey, J. 1890:1440-1462; Fletcher & LaFlesche 1972:76-78).

The Lakotas also link caves to a male spiritual presence. The home of *Waziya* or *Wazi*, the immortal and gigantic old man, is located at the edge of the earth in a cave, which has icicles for poles and snow as its covering (Walker 1917:91, 1983:334).[3] According to James Walker (1983:220-221, 222-223, 225-228, 249), the Lakotas associate caves with ice and believe that their crystalline formations, "white fruits," are the materials from which *Taku Skanskan* molded

[3] Many narratives about caves in Lakota traditions are connected to male figures of gigantic stature. Although less common, other stories associate caves with diminutive beings, such as Little People, or speak about animal spirits existing in miniature form before they are transmogrified into their physical appearance on earth. This occurs in a number of stories connected to Wind Cave (see Chapter Fourteen). They Cheyenne also believe in the existence of a mysterious people, the *Hoevotto*, who live in cavern homes (Moore, J. 1974:165).

the first man and woman of the *Pte Oyate* [Buffalo People]. In 1874, when the Black Hills Expedition stopped in the Cave Hills in northeastern South Dakota, they were shown, as correspondent William Curtis (in Krause and Olson 1974:160, 162) puts it, "one of the sacred caves" or "washum" of local tribes. This cave is now known as Ludlow Cave, and according to Curtis (in Krause and Olson 1974:110, 115, 116, 155), the elder Lakota and Arikara scouts held it in great regard, interpreting the pictographs and petroglyphs on the surrounding rock panels as the work of spirits. A.B. Donaldson (in Krause and Olson 1974:53), another correspondent, recounted what he heard about the cave: that an old bearded man dwelled there. Similar accounts tell of a cavern structure underneath the Black Hills that purportedly extended from one side of the Hills' center to the other and led to a river and springs that bestowed eternal life. Panthers guarded the entrance to this cave, and it was said that an old bearded medicine man of large stature lived there (Curtis in Krause and Olson 1974:129, 150). This idea extends back even earlier to 1851 in the writings of the trader Edwin Denig (in Ewers 1961:6).[4] Henry Boller[5] (1972: 3*27*) also related a story about a giant located in the Black Hills that he recorded in the 1850s:

> The Grindstone, an old Onc-pa-pa Sioux, who with his family resided among the Gros Ventres, frequently talked about a white hermit in the pines among the Black Hills. He had a hut on the summit of some towering rocks. No one had seen him, but they knew him to be a very tall man because they (the Sioux) found a deer, which he had killed and hung up in the top of a lofty pine tree. He is the person, they think, who poisoned all of the creeks and streams, causing such distress among the wild animals. There had been no thunder this spring, and it was currently believed that he had killed the thunder-bird.

Waziya is the grandfather of the Four Winds. The eldest, the North Wind, *Waziyata*, is named after his grandfather whose home he shares. He is widely associated in Lakota traditions with the emergence, movement, and disappearance of bison (Curtis 1907-30:3:77). As represented in a multitude of different oral traditions and sacred liturgical texts, he and his bison associates, including *Tatanka*, are identified with winter, rebirth, and health (Curtis 1907-30: 3:68, 111-118; 159; Wissler 1912:6, 19-20; Densmore 1918:196-197, 219, 220-223; Kemnitzer 1970:71; Black Elk in Brown 1971:133; Red Rabbit in Walker 1980:127; Walker 1980:232; Powers, W. 1986:139; St. Pierre and Long Soldier 1995:163). In a prayer for the *Pte San Lowanpi* ceremony, Black Elk (in Brown 1971:119-120) gives these words:

> O you, giant, Waziah, Power of the north, who guard the health of the people with your winds, and who purify the earth by making it white, you are the one who watches that path upon which our people walk. Help us especially today with your purifying influence, for we are about to make sacred a virgin, White Buffalo Cow Woman Appears, from whom will come the generations of our people. There is a place for you in this pipe...

And in a prayer for the *Tapa Wanka Yap* [Throwing the Ball Ceremony], he says:

[4] In reference to the Black Hills proper, some writers (Rezatto 1989:18-20) interpret this large bearded man to be a white man or a European American. This interpretation has little to support it. Indeed, if anything, it represents an example of how Europeans twisted so-called American Indian legends to serve their own interests and conquests. In the early twentieth century, elderly Cheyennes also had stories of an old white giant called *Hoimaha*, who brought the snow, frost, and cold in the winter, and who was identified with the wind and cardinal direction of the North, *Notamota* (Grinnell 1972:2:338-339; Moore, J. 1996:206-207). No stories were uncovered, however, that associate this figure with a cave. The Cheyennes also talked about a people who had lighter skin than Indian people, called *Hoevotto* in the Cheyennes' sacred language. These people lived underground where they forged metals that caused the mountains to smoke (Petter 1913-15:281).

[5] It is hard to know, however, whether or not Boller (1972:225) is writing about the Black Hills proper, since elsewhere he uses the term "Black Hills" to describe an area along the Knife River.

> O You where the Giant lives, who purifies with Your white breath, and You, winged one who guard this straight path, we are placing You in this pipe, and so help us with Your two sacred red and blue days! (in Brown 1971:132).

In this ceremony, Black Elk (in Brown 1971:133) explains that the young woman who throws the ball stands at the center and on the sacred path, which extends from the south, the direction people face when praying, to the north, "where the giant lives." At this spot she is able to see the sacred tree and the generations to come. The ball she holds in her hand symbolizes the universe, and when she throws it to the people in each of the four directions, she is recreating the cosmic order established by *Tate* and his sons, a structure also revealed in the movements and lifecycle of the bison (Ibid:134-135).

Lakotas think of the north as the place of *ni* [breath] and connect it directly to bison. Francis Densmore (1918:67-68) makes the connection between breath or wind-power, winter, and the buffalo in her analysis of a line from the "Song of the White Buffalo Maiden," which reads, "*Niya' tanin'yan...*with visible breath, *mawa'niye...*I am walking." According to Densmore (Ibid:68n1), when it is cold during the winter, "the breath of a herd of buffalo, rising in the frosty air, could be plainly seen."[6] Taking this a step further, William Powers (1977:191-192) writes that the North Wind, *Waziyata,* epitomizes winter, *waniyetu*, "the time and place of breath." In other words, this is the season when breath appears. Certain caves reveal clouds of condensation during the winter months, and thus, they are connected to bison whose presence in the wintertime is also made visible by the frosty emanations of their breath. Importantly, in the Lakota scheme of things, there is a powerful synergistic connection between winter, the North Wind, bison, caves, and breath, which is central to understanding the meaning of Wind Cave. As explained by the Lakota spiritual leader, Pete Catches (in Parlow 1983a:2-3; in Gonzalez 1996:67), Wind Cave is the location of one of the seven spiritual forces emerging at the time of creation and associated with *ni*, the breath of life.

Caves are also seen as symbolic equivalents of cocoons, insofar as both signify enclosed spaces where life is incubated, awaiting rebirth and regeneration through the materialization of breath. Like the whirlwind and its associates, the dragonfly, butterfly, and spider, humans and bison emerge from a cocoon-like formation that gives birth to the life force (Brown 1970:6-11, 1992:49; Red Shirt 2002:204). One story told by Oscar Howe (in St. Pierre and Long Soldier 1995:49-50) of a man being gifted by a spider while sleeping inside a cave reveals this connection.[7] Wind Cave is a quintessential representation of this process because of its capacity to release *ni* or breath, a manifestation of *Tate*, the Wind's movement and a basic force in creation.

Lakotas regard the north-south axis as analogous to the nadir and zenith, and they believe that after death, the *wanagi* travel along the Milky Way to the south, and when they arrive, they return to the north under the earth to be reborn (Powers, W. 1977:192; Powers, M. 1986:69, 191).[8] In some Lakota texts, it is *Waziya*, the Old Man, who determines whether people go on to the land of the dead or get sent to the underworld (Tyon in Walker 1980:123),[9] or he is believed to bring

[6] Stanley Vestal (1932:18) also writes about how Lakotas were able to find a herd in the winter by the "cloud of frozen breath floating above them," and how bulls moved against the wind even in blizzards.

[7] This story is also interesting because the gift the man receives is knowledge of a nearby mountain where flint is located. Battle Mountain, the famous flint quarry, is situated near many of the caves in the southeastern reaches of the Black Hills, including those at Wind Cave National Park. Flint is the stone used in making fire, one of the elemental forces in the creation of life.

[8] The Cheyennes have similar beliefs (Moore, J. 1974:145).

[9] In some accounts, *To Win* [Blue Woman] plays this role (Goodman 1992:38-39). Curiously, Red Rabbit (in Walker 1980:126) talks about the tipi of *Waziya* being located in the sky. This confirms, once again, the dual placement of many spiritual figures in sky and earth spaces.

messages from people who have died and gone to the spirit land. Red Rabbit told Walker (1980:127) how *Waziya* is the one who admits people to the spirit world from his sky position:

> The manes of the wanagi pass by his tipi when they travel to the spirit world. He talks with them and they tell him what they know. If they are worthy he permits them to pass on. The trail of the tipi of Woziya is high in the sky, and he keeps it covered with ice so that it is hard to travel. When one dies, his shadow must rest and so people must feed it. Beyond the home of Woziya it is never cold and never hot. There is plenty there.

Holes on the earth are often connected to those in the sky and are understood as places where the forces of the universe converge at a single powerful point, creating the dynamics and energy that brings life within the circle or cycle of creation (Goodman 1992:17-19). In Lakota traditions, as previously described, there is a hole in the sky in the center of the Big Dipper where souls pass through and are given direction for their journey south along the path of the Milky Way (Goodman 1992:38). On earth, white buffalo robes, once displayed at spirit keeping ceremonies, were placed in holes or caves to the north, as a gift anticipating the soul's entrance into a parallel hole in the sky (Curtis 1907-30:3:110). Again, after traveling to the spirit world in the south, the soul eventually makes its way north to the underworld where it is reborn and emerges in a materialized form through caves on the earth's surface. The Cheyennes are reported to have buried their dead in caves, crevices in rocks, or holes in the ground which they covered with stone (Curtis 1907-30:6:158; Grinnell 1972:2:163). This was also an older practice among the Lakotas as well (Bordeaux 1929:161-162; Hassrick 1964:296-297).[10] Like *wanagi*, bison returned to and emerged from the north and the subterranean world in order to be reborn. The sun also travels to the underworld. Throughout North America, when night arrives on the earth's surface the Sun travels to subterranean locations where he visits with his associates, the bison (Little Wound in Walker 1980:67; Hall 1997:133-134).[11]

Since caves are conceptualized as life-force centers where the soul is released to be materialized through the breath of life, it is not surprising that many tribes believe that the first humans emerged from a cave. The Cheyennes attributed their own origins to a cave located in a distant land to the north where the country was barren and provided little more than rabbits for the people's survival (Grinnell 1972:1:4-5). They also attribute rebirth and regeneration to caves, as revealed in various Sweet Medicine and Stands on the Ground stories, including one located in the southern Black Hills (Schlesier 1987:9, 79-80). This is true for the Lakotas as well, whose own origin story is linked to Wind Cave.

No matter how caves are understood and described in Lakota and Cheyenne traditions, they are generally linked to breath, bison, winter, the North Wind and the related themes of immortality, rebirth, and the continuation of life through death. They are also linked to sites where sacred knowledge is revealed in visionary experiences, although typically the cave where this happens is located inside a mountain or hill (Haflen and Haflen 1956:268-272; Parkman in Feltskog 1969:156-157; LaPointe 1976:79-80; Grinnell 1972:1:202, 2:136, 285, 340, 368-369; Bucko 1999:172-173, 184-185). Again, sites of this order represent a powerful meeting place and

[10] Although there are detailed descriptions of Lakota spirit-keeping ceremonies and other funeral practices, there is little about their specific manner of laying the deceased to rest other than scaffold burials (Densmore 1918:77-84; Curtis 1907-30:3:99-110; Hassrick 1964:293-298). William Bordeaux (1929:161-162), however, indicates that in earlier times the Lakotas dug a cave in a cliff or bank to bury their dead. He wrote that this kind of burial was called "*Maya-Oki-Ti*, [living in a cave]. Rich Two Dogs (in Parlow 1983a:6) mentions that his grandfather told him that he had a sister who was buried in the vicinity of Wind Cave.

[11] In Cheyenne traditions, the semi-cardinal direction, the Southeast, is widely associated with the Sun.

juxtaposition between earth and sky spaces. These are what Vine Deloria, Jr. and Richard Stoffle (1998:12) identify as sacred portals, "where it is possible to pass from one universe to another." According to them, the Lakotas believe that several of these places exist in the Black Hills.

3. Springs, Rivers, and Lakes

Places of water are commonly identified as sacred locales. In the Black Hills, the lake at Bear Butte is one of these (Grinnell 1926:244-247; McAllister 1965). As described in Chapter Nine, large bodies of water, rivers and lakes, are associated in L/Dakota beliefs with a distinct class of spiritual beings, often envisioned as giant snakes or large lizards with horns (Dorsey, J. 1894: 438-440). In Cheyenne traditions, these water spirits and their underwater "people" are also known to guard the buffalo and to control their appearance and disappearance on earth (Grinnell 1972:2:97). The fossilized remains of various prehistoric animals are widely connected to these water figures in Lakota and Cheyenne thought, and the places where they are found are often revered.

Of greater importance to the area around Wind Cave National Park are springs. Springs are highly regarded by the Cheyennes and Lakotas wherever they are located, not only because they are often sources of fresh water, but also because they are passageways between the underworld and the earth's surface (Moore, J. 1974:164; Standing Bear 1978:150). In some Cheyenne stories, springs, like caves, were locations where bison and other game came to the earth's surface from their subterranean homes (Grinnell 1972:2:261). The Lakotas called springs *wiwila* [little life] (Buechel 1970:591; Standing Bear 1978:150) and *mni c'api* [water trap] or *mniowe* [a fountain of water] (Buechel 1970 338), while the Cheyennes knew them as *hohame* or *emeanoexz* [referring to the jumping like action of the water] (Petter 1913-15:499, 1004).[12] Pete Catches (in Parlow 1983a:2; in Gonzalez 1996:67) talked about the Hot Springs area as the embodiment of another sacred presence, the spirit of the water, who came to the Hills at the time of creation.

Springs are often associated with many of the same ideas that surround caves. Like caves, they are understood as a wind, life-force center where the soul is released to be reborn in a material form. Among the Lakotas[13] and other tribal nations in the plains region, springs are associated metaphorically with an infant's fontanel, the spot where it is believed that the soul enters the body just before birth. Just as the fontanel was a center, the point where the lines of the skull connected, so springs and caves were seen as connecting points for important transformative processes (Hall 1997:99-101).

Springs are also linked to diminutive beings that dwell near rocky outcroppings or underneath the ground. Little People are known to harm those who carelessly cross their paths by shooting them with tiny arrows, but they are also known to help people if approached with proper respect (Grinnell 1971:2:126; LaPointe 1976:45-46; Tyon in Walker 1980:170-171). In Lakota beliefs, these diminutive spirits also play a role in the appearance of game animals and in the productivity and potency of plants, and they are commonly associated with the Hot Springs-Wind Cave area (LaPointe 1976:45,84). The connection of Little People to mountains, rocky outcroppings, caves, and springs is also common among other tribes known to have frequented the Black Hills in the early historic period, including the Arapahos (Dorsey and Kroeber 1903: 121-125; Anderson, R. 1956; Anderson, J. 2001:49; the Poncas (Howard 1965a:18), Kiowas (Mooney 1979:239), and the

[12] A waterfall was called *zeanhoneo map* [Falling water] in Cheyenne (Petter 1913-15:1097) and *Mniwohaha* in Lakota (Buechel 1970:339).
[13] *Pe'wiwila* is the word for an infant's fontanel in Lakota (Buechel 1970:442).

Crows (Grinnell 1922:306; Frey 1987:174; Nabakov and Loendorf 1994:93-95; McCleary 1997: 45-47).

Another spiritual figure associated with springs, caves, and rocky outcroppings in Lakota traditions is the Double-Woman, *Winyan Nupapika* (Sundstrom, L. 2002:110). One Lakota story associates this figure with the Hot Springs region (Herman in One Feather 1974:149). Figures representing her are also found on the walls of the canyon gateways to the Black Hills. Some are also situated near caves, including Ludlow Cave in the Cave Hills of northwestern South Dakota and Medicine Creek Cave on the northwestern side of the Black Hills (Sundstrom, L. 2002:110-111). These may have been sites where Lakota women fasted and sought visions in early historic times (Sundstrom, L. 2002:100-109).

4. Canyons, Rock Outcroppings, and Rock Art

Other unusual topographic features, including unique bluffs, boulders, rock outcroppings or rocky overhangs, ledges, and canyons, may also be identified as sacred places. These seem to be associated with any of a variety of figures, and there appears to be no specific cast of spiritual beings that are more or less reported at these places. Canyons, bluffs, or rock outcroppings of special significance include those with petroglyphs and pictographs, ones with distinctive shapes, those which mark dramatic transitional zones between different environments, or passageways associated with the transhumance movement of animals (Sundstrom, L. 1990). Canyons, for example, often evoke a sense of liminality because they are betwixt and between spaces, connecting and simultaneously separating one kind of world from another. Generally, their meaning does not stand alone but is derived from the landscapes they border and connect. Often, they are associated with special places that certain animals and plants frequent (Deloria, V. Jr. and Stoffle 1998:14-15). This is true for a number of places in the Black Hills, notably, the Buffalo Gap, Red and Craven canyons, and French Creek (Sundstrom, L. 1990:287-299). The Buffalo Gap is particularly significant because of its V-shape, and the fact that one of its side canyons contains a natural arch. The depression known as the Race Track (or Red Valley) can also be included here because it is widely recognized as an unusual topographic feature in the Black Hills (see stories in Chapter Fourteen), one that forms a circle or hoop, which is widely regarded as sacred in Lakota and Cheyenne beliefs, and one that is mirrored in a star constellation (Goodman 1992:7).

Red, Craven, and Whoop-Up Canyons are highly significant because of their petroglyphs and pictographs, some of which are believed to convey messages about the future, communications that spirits reveal to those who know how to interpret their symbols (Catches in Parlow 1983a:3; Eagle Hunter in Parlow 1983a:13; Red Owl in Parlow 1983a:21; Sundstrom, L. 1990; Deloria, V. Jr. and Stoffle 1998:16; Good Eagle in Little Eagle 2000:212-213). French Creek also has rock art, some of which has clear connections to the Lakotas in historic and possibly even protohistoric times (Sundstrom, L. 2002). Like the Lakotas, the Cheyennes respect any stone with petroglyphs and pictographs (Moore, J. 1974:171, 175). The culture resource officers we interviewed from both tribes indicated that any rock art found in Wind Cave National Park needs protection (Albers and Kittleson 2002).

B. The Black Hills and Their Landforms

Although many different landforms have long held sacred value to America's tribal nations, little was known or written about them in published sources. Considering the plains region as a whole, Douglas Parks and Waldo Wedel (1985:167) write:

> The ethnographic and historical literature of the plains region contains only sporadic, frequently vague, references to geographical sites considered sacred to Indian groups. Whether the lack of specific discussion represents fortuitous omission by recorders of Indian culture or whether it suggests that for many tribes there simply were few sites that were so perceived is not entirely clear. But the number of references to sacred places scattered throughout the literature is sufficient to attest to their undoubted existence for all tribes and to suggest their fundamental importance as well.

With only a few exceptions, ethnographers paid little attention to the geography of tribal life. This was true not only for places that had religious significance, but also for locations commonly used in the procurement of food and other resources. Even the routes local groups customarily traveled and the sites they typically used to camp were often unmarked. Indeed, a scholarly interest in tribal geography has emerged only within the past few decades, and those who pursue this interest have had to draw on a wide variety of sources from historic documents to contemporary oral traditions to reconstruct and map these landscapes.

In the case of the Black Hills, as noted in previous chapters, historic and ethnographic source materials often lack specificity when it comes to mapping the locations of tribal settlements, sites for subsistence, or routes of travel in and around the Hills. Not surprisingly, and with few exceptions, details are also lacking for places known to have historic and/or contemporary spiritual significance. Nevertheless, a general sense, and in some cases a very specific appreciation, of the area's importance and the meaning of its various sites can be understood in terms of a generic understanding of the land forms that make up its total landscape.

One can argue that the Black Hills are viewed as spiritually significant to the Lakotas and Cheyennes because they contain land forms that connect all planes of the universe from the lofty heights of their mountain tops to the deepest depths of their immense underground caverns. The Hills contain a multitude of caves, springs, unusual rock outcroppings, and distinctive high elevation prairies and meadows. They are also surrounded by a unique depression, the Red Valley, which nearly encircles the Hills and separates the interior limestone plateau from the outer sandstone Hogback. This formation, also known as the Race Track, is accessed through a number of different and unusual gateways, including the Buffalo Gap and Red Canyon. Finally, the two branches of a major waterway, the Cheyenne River, nearly surround them. Given the special character and diversity of their geophysical forms, many of which conform to tribal ideas about life-force centers, it is easy to imagine how the Black Hills serves as an hierophany,[14] a place that metaphorically represents the entire cosmos. The Hills and their outlier formations not only contain the totality of elements and forces that make up Cheyenne and Lakota universes, but they do so while encompassing all tiers of the cosmos in every direction (Brown Hat in Mallery 1893: 289-290; Catches in Parlow 1983a:82-83; Catches in Gonzalez 1996:67). Like the sacred landscapes of many other tribal nations, which constitute an "integrated system of locations" (Kelly and Francis 1994:96), the Black Hills can be seen as representing for the Lakotas and Cheyennes an ordered and integrated group of landforms that, in part, derive their significance and meaning from their relationship to each other. As will be argued in the following chapters, the Black Hills form a unified landscape whose various sites are linked together in a variety of tribal narratives and ceremonial cycles.

While landforms in the Black Hills are tied to each other, they also express unique identities that reflect the distinctive characteristics of the spiritual potentialities with which they are asso-

[14] This idea has already been skillfully developed in Kari Forbes-Boyte's writings (1996, 1999) on Bear Butte.

ciated. Different landforms carry different stories of extraordinary happenings that unfolded in myth time and of mysterious experiences that took place within historic memory. Some of these occurrences led to the origin of important forms of knowledge and practice, which not only explain how the universe came to be, but also how humanity plays a role in its continuance and renewal. Some sacred places in the Black Hills have become the focus of intense ceremonial observance. As Kari Forbes-Boyte (1999:23-24) writes in relation to Bear Butte:

> The Lakotas view the entire world as sacred; however, certain locales have become especially holy because of the activities that transpire there. The rituals, to an extent, continue to feed the power of the place. The spirits continue to contact the individual at the site and the Great Spirit continues to respond to prayers offered at Bear Butte.

Others are not associated with an elaborate or recurring pattern of ritual use, however. Only certain people approach them to carry on specific religious functions, or they come when they are spiritually prepared and called upon to do so. The prairie areas of the central Black Hills, which the Lakotas call *Pe Sla*, appear to be of this order. Finally, there are probably many places (not recorded in the literature) that receive little, if any, ceremonial attention and are largely left alone. These sites are avoided not because they are any less holy but out of a deep regard and respect for what spiritually resides there. Not uncommonly, the avoidance rests on the belief that ordinary people neither have the knowledge nor the spiritual qualifications to approach them in a correct manner. The place can be dangerous when people lack an awareness of how to properly conduct themselves in its presence.

It should also be said that places in the Black Hills derive significance not simply from the spiritual manifestations connected with their geophysical forms, but from the other living beings that reside there and make up their landscapes. As mentioned in other contexts, there is a synergistic connection between the spiritual potentialities expressed in landforms and the particular species of animals, varieties of plants, and classes of minerals who dwell in their reaches. In Lakota perspectives, for example, Harney Peak evokes a spiritual persona different from Wind Cave and its environs, which include the Hot Springs, the Race Track, and the Buffalo Gap. Together, all of the sites in and around the Black Hills form a totality: they are the gathering place of people, animals, plants, and minerals from all points of the compass. The incredible diversity of the Hills' living forms makes it a special place for the Lakotas and Cheyennes, a location where the divine continues to be revealed through all of its myriad and mysterious manifestations.

II. SACRED COMMUNICATION AND OBSERVANCE

In Lakota and Cheyenne cultures, sacred places require an understanding of how to approach them in order that they might reveal and manifest their spiritual presence. Entering into relations with the sacred is created in many different ways, involving personal as well as communal forms of observance. In either case, forming such relations usually takes place in the company of intercessors who possess special knowledge and talents enabling them to bring about the manifestation of the sacred in human contexts. This section gives attention, albeit very briefly, to the language, people, and observances that make up Cheyenne and Lakota religious practice. There is an immense literature on this subject written by ethnographers and scholars in other disciplines that can only be highlighted here.

On the Lakotas, there are the early and important writings of James Walker (1917, 1980, 1983) and Francis Densmore (1918), which include the verbatim texts of their Lakota advisors. Since the 1970s, many writings have summarized this early work and also added new details

learned from contemporary Lakota people. These include writings by Raymond DeMallie (1987, 1987), William Powers (1977, 1982, 1986), Thomas Mails (1978), Louis Kemnitzer (1970, 1976), Stephen Feraca (1998), Thomas Lewis (1990), and Raymond Bucko (1999), among others. Also, there are significant accounts written or narrated by Lakotas in more recent times (Black Elk in Brown 1971; Black Elk in DeMallie 1984; Fools Crow in Mails 1972, 1991; Fire and Erdoes 1978*;* Standing Bear 1978, 1988; Amiotte 1987, 1989a, 1989b, 1989c; Looking Horse 1987; Medicine 1987; Black Elk, W. and Lyon 1990; Catches, Sr. and Catches 1990; St. Pierre and Long Soldier 1995; Young Bear and Theisz 1994).

In the case of the Cheyennes, George Dorsey (1905) and George Bird Grinnell (1910, 1914, 1919, 1972) wrote some of the major early works on religious practice, and more recently, Robert Anderson, R. (1956), Father Peter Powell (1969), Karl Schlesier (1987), and John Moore (1974, 1996) have written extensively on this subject too. There is also a literature on this topic from a Cheyenne perspective (Stands in Timber and Liberty 1967; Ant et al. in Leman 1987*;* Whiteman in Schwartz 1988; Red Hat in Schukies 1993).

A. Sacred Language

Making a connection with that which is sacred always demands a basic sense of reverence and respect in order to invoke its powers and participate in some form of life renewal. It requires knowledge of proper forms of communication as expressed in words, music, dance, and art. Only language is described here, but many of the distinctions that apply in this mode communication also cover other forms of expression.

Spirituality, the act or sense of being spiritual, comes closest to the Lakota word *wakan'la,* which means to worship or to reckon something as holy (Buechel 1970:526). Another term, *wo-wicala*, refers to a petition, a consideration, or intention for invoking assistance in regards to spiritual matters (Powers, W. 1986:106-107). In the language and everyday life of the common people, the *Ikce*, there are a host of other words that express the awe, respect, and reverence customarily needed when beholding and experiencing *Taku Wakan*, that which is sacred. *Oho'la* and *ok'niha* both signify an act of respect, worship, or honor (Buechel 1970:374, 390). *Ahokipa* is a another verb that designates the act of taking care of, valuing, or respecting something (Ibid:62), while *cante-elyuza* expresses esteem, the process of having or holding something in one's heart (Ibid:134), and *yuo'nihan* entails treating something with special attention (Ibid:646).

In contrast to the language typically used in everyday discourse about spiritual matters, there are two other forms of speech in the Lakota language. According to Charlotte Black Elk (1986b: 192) *tobtob* is a formal speech confined to religious settings and certain formal governmental contexts, and *hanbloglaia* is a liturgical and sacred form of communication. The latter is associated with the telling of visions and dreams (Buechel 1970:165). It is the speech that medicine men and women employ in addressing the spirit world; it involves speech modifications of a morphological, lexical, and syntactic nature as well as unique metaphorical allusions that appear only in sacred contexts. As examples, the name of the South Wind, *Wihoyiyanpa* is abbreviated to *Yanpa* in sacred texts, the expression *oyate wakan* [sacred nation] is inverted to *wakan oyate*, or a word is metaphoric as when *cante* [heart] is used to connote a sacred center. It is also associated with unique forms of expression that communicate abstract philosophical ideas about the universe, its creation, its unfolding, and its purpose (Powers, W. 1986:11-41; Amiotte 1989b).

The Cheyennes make similar distinctions, using certain names only to address the *maiyun* in sacred ceremonies (Schlesier 1987:8). Originally, shamans formed an esoteric, closed group, the

Ononeovataneo, who used language hidden to outsiders (Schlesier 1987:14). The word *ma'heo-netano* describes the distinctive, non-ordinary way of thinking that is associated with the spiritual and the sacred, and one that is connected to the work of shamans and other religionists (Rock-roads in Leman 1987:210-212; Leman 1987:415).

B. Tribal Religionists

All Lakota and Cheyenne people can approach the sacred. However, some are more gifted at doing so, either because they experience extraordinary spiritual encounters and/or they learn through apprenticeship the knowledge and practice necessary to enter into relationships with the spirit world. Generally speaking, communication with this world is associated with gifted men and women who are able to properly address spirits through their knowledge of special words, songs, dances, and designs.

Historically, among the Cheyennes, spiritual intercessors served as vehicles or conduits through which sacred information and power flowed for the benefit of humankind (Schlesier 1987:18). The Cheyennes appear to have had three major groups of intercessors. One group, known as *naetan* or *nae*, received their spiritually derived talents from animal spirits, and they used these in the practice of doctoring, hunting, and warfare but without the assistance of the *Maiyun*. Another group, called *zemaheonevsso* [mysterious ones], was granted their power by specific *Maiyun* (Schlesier 1987:14). These shamanic intercessors were further divided into two categories, according to whether the *Maiyun* they served were of the sky or the earth. The shamans affiliated with the sky included the *Hemaneh* [half man, half woman] and *Hohnuhka*, or Contraries, who received their powers from *Nonoma*, the Thunder (Schlesier 1987:14-15). Those connected to the earth included the shamans who held powers to influence game and to practice certain kinds of healing associated with the earth's fauna and flora (Anderson, R. 1956 1956; Schlesier 1987:16; Powell 2002a, 2002b). The last group was the *Maheonhetaneo*, men and women who served the *Maiyun* and contacted them during the Cheyennes' major religious observances. These people functioned more as priests or as "theologists" in conducting the tribe's major ceremonies, the *Oxheheom* [Sun Dance] and *Massuam* [Animal Dance], and in caring for the tribe's two sacred covenants, *Mashoet* [the Sacred Arrows] and *Esevone* [the Sacred Hat]. The *Maheonhetaneo* held a sacred trust that obligated them to make many sacrifices on behalf of the *Maheyuno* and *Maiyun* they served and to conduct themselves among the people with the highest degree of circumspection (Moore, J. 1974a:258-260; Schlesier 1987:14-16).

Among the Lakotas, people who are adept at interceding with the spirit world are known as *wicasa wakan* or *winyan wakan* [holy men or holy women] (Powers, W. 1986:181; St. Pierre and Long Soldier 1995:126-141; Feraca 1998:45). These people are gifted with special talents, which they receive in dreams or visions and through recurring relations with their spiritual helpers. Most of these men and women do not practice alone; they enter into longtime apprenticeships with experienced holy people to learn the specialized knowledge associated with the spiritual talents they receive. According to William Powers (1986:181, 190), these holy people were historically divided into several different classes, which include *wakan kaga* [people who imitate something sacred], *wapiyupi* [people who make something anew], and *wicahmunga* [wizards] and *wimunga* [witches] about whom little has been written in the literature (Powers, W. 1986:188; Feraca 1998: 47). Those who heal and renew life through the use of plants with or without the intervention of spirit helpers are known as *pejuta wicasa* or *winyan* [herb men or women] (Powers 1986:182-183; Lewis T. 1990:111-112, 124-139; St. Pierre and Long Soldier 1995:28, 31-33; Feraca 1998:46, 71-80).

The *wakan kaga* are differentiated by the nature of their dreams and spiritual partners (Powers, W. 1977:56-67; 1986:180,183-188). The *tatanka kaga* or *tatanka inhanblayaci*, for example, are bison imitators or bison dreamers. They are people who have been given "permission" to imitate the buffalo and conduct performances that, in effect, call forth the bison's spiritual potentialities. *Heyoka kaga* are people sought out by the Thunders and inspired to perform on their behalf. Historically, men and women with similar dream experiences, whether of bison, elk, bear, wolves, or badgers, formed loose associations where they enacted their shared spiritual strengths. Depending on the nature of their spiritual prowess, holy people applied their talents in specific ways. Some were able to heal, while others were skilled at hunting and attracting the animals they imitated. Some were endowed with the knowledge to make protective medicines to keep themselves and others from danger and misfortune (Wissler 1912:81-99; Powers, W. 1977:57-59, 1986:182).

People who engage in healing, the *wapiyapi*, are also distinguished by the source of their spiritual powers. A *tatanka wapiye* [buffalo healer], for example, is spiritually partnered with bison[15] and able to make medicines associated with this animal (Powers, W. 1986:183; Lewis, T. 1990:93, 96-98, 100-105; St. Pierre and Long Soldier 1995:27-31). Closely related to the *wapiye* and part of the same class are the *Yuwipi wicasa*, whose healing roles and performances, according to William Powers (1986:183; Lewis, T. 1990:71-105), best conform with the idea of a shaman. Historically, some of the most revered *wapiyapi* had multiple spirit partners, and in modern times, many of the most admired *Yuwipi* serve as a vehicle for many different spirits (Powers, W. 1986:126). Frank Fools Crow (in Mails 1991:30-45) describes *Yuwipi* like himself as "hollow bones," people who are able to "channel" or serve as a conduit of power from the spirit world: he emphasizes here that *wicasa wakan* do not inherently possess power.

Today, many of the specialized forms of spiritual intercession that were once common in Lakota communities have disappeared or have been reworked and combined with the spiritual performances of *Yuwipi*. Even though these healers were prohibited from practicing their talents by the federal government in the early reservation era (Densmore 1918:245), they are now the most prevalent class of *wapiyapi* among the Lakotas (Densmore 1918:204-244; Kemnitzer 1970; Powers W. 1982; Black Elk, W. and Lyon 1990; Lewis, T. 1990:90-93, 108, 183; Feraca 1998: 53). *Yuwipi wapiyapi* not only have partnerships with their original patron, *Inyan* [Stone], but they also have relations with a host of other spirits whose potentialities, *sicun*, are embodied in stones and other objects (Densmore 1918:204-273; Kemnitzer 1970, 1976; Powers, W. 1982:11-15; St. Pierre and Long Soldier 1995:96; Feraca 1998:30-44). From Fools Crow's various discussions (in Mails 1972:49-52, 93-94, 186; Lewis, T. 1990:72-80) on these matters, Lakota *Yuwipi* appear to differ from other *wapiyapi*, not so much by the character of their spiritual benefactors but in the ways in which they handle and transmit the *ton* or power of these spirits. The hallmark of the *Yuwipi* is their ability to transmute and contain spiritual power through the workings of the *sicun* (described earlier in Chapter Nine). There is a rich published literature on *Yuwipi* and the ceremonies they perform. The reader is advised to consult these sources for further details (Densmore 1918:204-244; Kemnitzer 1970; Fools Crow in Mails 1972; Powers W. 1982; Black Elk, W. and Lyon 1990; Lewis, T. 1990:90-93; Feraca 1998; Holy Bull in Keeney 1999).

Beyond their ability to heal and do other mysterious works, a few of the most talented holy men and women, with a broad and powerful base of knowledge, also perform major ceremonies, such as the *Pte San Lowanpi* (White Buffalo Cow Sing), *Hunkapi* (Making Relatives), and the *Wiwinyan wacipi* (Sun Dance), where the sacred is invoked on behalf of an entire community.

[15] Other animals, as described in Chapter Nine and Appendix A, are associated with other specialized forms of healing (Powers, W. 1986:180).

Among the Lakotas, there does not appear to be a conventionalized set of distinctions that formally separate the religious intercessors for public observances from other spiritually gifted people, as exists among the Cheyennes. The most accomplished intercessors are singled out for their public roles by the nature and degree of their spiritual talents, their knowledge, and the respectful ways they conduct their lives (DeMallie 1984:102n3; Powers, M. 1986:126; St. Pierre and Long Soldier 1995:17-35; Feraca 1998:27).

C. Spiritual Observances

In the Lakota and Cheyenne scheme of things, spirituality is not simply an attitude but a respectful relationship that binds people to the spirit world through complex reciprocal exchanges. The reciprocity that exists between people and the spiritual beings that make up the universe of the Lakota and Cheyenne is often expressed, as described in previous chapters, through the metaphorical use of kinship terminology (Moore, J. 1996:245-249; DeMallie 1984:81-82; 1987:30-31).

Among Cheyennes, power or energy flows from *Ma'heo* to human beings through several different channels. It first comes through the highest spirits, the *maiyun*, and from them to lesser spirits who represent different species of natural phenomena. According to John Moore (1996: 246), "birds and animals are said to receive their power in the same manner as human beings, through dancing, singing, eating certain herbs, and painting themselves." Cheyennes mimicked the actions, sounds, and colors of animals in their own ceremonies in order to replicate the spiritual potentialities of different species. For this imitation to work, however, the Cheyennes are expected to gain permission from the animals: this usually takes place through reciprocal partnerships formed in dreams and visions (Schlesier 1987:13,15).

Similarly, Lakota see themselves as vehicles through which powers coming from the spirits can be generated and imitated [*kagapi*] or transmuted to stones and other objects as in the work of the *Yuwipi* (Black Elk in DeMallie 1984:235-238; Fools Crow in Mails 1991:46-60). These transformative processes take the form of dance, song, prayer, and art based on the inspiration and instructions received from the various spirit potentialities that represent *Wakan Tanka* (Powers, W. 1977:56-60,1986:183-188; Black Elk in DeMallie 1984:232-235, 240, 242-244; DeMallie 1987:34; Lewis, T. 1990:71-150; Fools Crow in Mails 1991:30-168; St. Pierre and Long Soldier 1995:156-167). Beyond their partnerships with particular spirits, the Lakotas sought in all of their rituals to get in touch with fundamental life-processes at the core of creation (Amiotte 1989a). To engage the spiritual and to bring its gifts into the realm of human activity took place in many different ways.

1. Petitioning the Sacred

All religious observances involve, at their heart, prayers and offerings to the sacred. These may be as simple as the placement of tobacco and the recitation of a prayer when a plant is taken for food or medicine. In these simple petitions, offerings of value – tobacco, stones, coins, or beads -- are not necessarily visible at the locations where they are left. Often, these gifts are placed at a spot discretely and hidden from view, or like tobacco, they are perishable. Prayers and offerings can be made anywhere and anytime a person deems it appropriate to do so to demonstrate their respect to specific spirits or *Ma'heo* and *Wakan Tanka* in general.

Among the Lakotas, some of the more visible offerings, such as cloth banners, *waunyapi*, or tobacco ties, *canli wapahta*, small pieces of red cloth containing tobacco and strung together, are

associated with certain forms of religious practice (Kemnitzer 1970:68-72; Powers, W. 1982:14; Feraca 1998:15, 36, 53); they are not ubiquitous. They are not commonly used by the Cheyennes, and even among the Lakotas, they represent only two of the ways in which offerings are made (Feraca 1998:72-75). The absence of cloth banners or tobacco ties does not mean, *a priori*, that an area is not being used spiritually, as Beverly Chirinos (1992:96-98) assumed in her assessment of Lakota relations to Inyan Kara Mountain. While the use of tobacco ties is very common at Bear Butte and the Medicine Wheel in the Big Horns, it is not always necessary or even appropriate at other locations or under other circumstances. What is offered and how it is offered depends in large part on the spiritual presence associated with a place and also the cultural background of the petitioner. Indeed, according to one of Stephen Feraca's Oglala consultants, Mrs. Fast Horse, who was a *pejuta winyan* [a female herbalist], it is a good sign when the offerings are blown away or disappear because it means they've been taken by the spirits (Feraca 1998:76-77).

At Wind Cave National Park, the park's staff has sighted only a few tobacco ties over the past decade (Terry 1999, personal communication). This should not imply that offerings are not placed here with any frequency or regularity; it only suggests that a certain type of offering is not widely seen. Wind Cave is connected to things of the earth, stone, and the underworld. It is the home of the bison, and offerings to their spirits are often perishable, placed on the earth's surface, and/or buried in the ground. This appears to be the case not only with some of the offerings given to the sacred tree at the Sun Dance, but also with the placement of white buffalo skins at the completion of a Spirit Keeping ceremony (Curtis 1907-30:3:110; Densmore 1918:118; Sword in Deloria 1929:398). Indeed, Wallace Black suggests as much when he writes about how the prayer ties from a *Yuwipi* are wrapped up and buried. As he writes:

> Then you take this bundle up to a mountain or hill. You find a virgin spot where there are no tracks, where there's a lot of bushes or tall grasses. You tuck it in there or put it in the crouch of a tree or lift a rock and put it underneath.

When these offerings are visible, they need to be left alone. Some of the tribal cultural officers with whom we spoke emphasized the need to advise tourists at the park not to touch and handle these offerings (Albers and Kittelson 2002).

Petitions to the spirit world are also an integral part of the elaborate sequence of offerings and prayers that make up major ceremonial observances such as the Lakota's *Hunkapi* [Making Relatives] or the Cheyennes' *Massaum* [Animal Dance]. Throughout the entire ceremonial realm of the Lakotas and Cheyennes, the making of an altar and ceremonial fire on virgin ground (cleared of all vegetation) and the smoking of a pipe are fundamental features of most prayerful observances (Walker 1917:129-130; New Holy 1997:139-142). The pipe is the vehicle through which tobacco is transformed into the smoke, which carries the prayers of the people to their creator, *Wakan Tanka* or *Ma'heo*, and to all of the spirits who signify their presence in the world (Lame Deer and Erdoes 1978:2). Smoking a pipe that is lit from a specially built altar and ceremonial fire is absolutely indispensable in communicating with the spirit world. Pipe offerings may be made on their own, but they are always incorporated into ceremonies where they are a necessary and integral part of all religious observances (Stands in Timber and Liberty 1967:93; Powell 1969:14, 17, 291, 334, 402-403, 835, 855, 897, 900; Black Elk in Brown 1971:13-14 *et seq.*; Sword in Walker 1980:75-77; 87-90; Walker 1980:176-177, 219-221, 249-250, 260-261; Black Elk in DeMallie 1984:34, 46, 48, 117-118, 223-234, 236-239, 240, 243-244, 334, 372-373; Whiteman in Schwartz 1988:49-50; Moore, J. 1996:240, 246; Bucko 1999:204).

2. Preparing for the Sacred

Communicating with the sacred requires a cleansing of the mind and body in order to restore the life force, or "breath," in preparation for receiving spiritual gifts. The purification lodge or sweatlodge is the most common vehicle for achieving this state of renewal. Among the Lakotas and the Cheyennes, these lodges are increasingly practiced as rites unto themselves and with considerable variation (Moore, J. 1996:234-237). Yet, they remain an indispensable part of the preparations behind all other ceremonial observances, including the Sun Dance, vision seeking, and *Yuwipi* (Grinnell 1919; Powell 1969:1:324, 328, 352, 2:492-493, 609-610, 854-855; Black Elk in Brown 1971:31-42; Black Elk in DeMallie 1984:82-84 *et seq.*; Schlesier 1987:59-66, 79-80; Black Elk, W. and Lyon 1990:67-86; Catches, Sr. and Catches 1990:77-91; Feraca 1998:32-35; Bucko 1999).

Among the Cheyennes, the sweatlodge is used for purification in many different contexts to prepare people to receive spiritual powers without being harmed (Schlesier 1987:62). Historically, it was part of the ceremonial observances used in "calling" game during communal hunts, in releasing the spirit of the deceased, in purifying a white buffalo skin, in healing of various kinds, in making warriors ready for battle, and in preparing people to participate in all sacred endeavors (Curtis 1907:6:117, 145; Grinnell 1919, 1972:1:272-273; Anderson, R. 1956; Powell 1969:1:324, 328, 352, 2:492-493, 609-610, 854-855; Schlesier 1987:59, 62, 64-66; Moore, J. 1996:234-237). The classic sweatlodges, either the *emaom* [concealed lodge] or *vonhaom* [to lose by heat lodge] of the Cheyennes originate with the bison, and both are associated with the accounts of *Ehyophstah,* the Yellow Haired Woman, Sweet Medicine, and/or Stands on the Ground (Grinnell 1919; Anderson, R. 1956; Schlesier 1987:62, 64-66, 77-79). According to Edward Curtis (1907-30:6:117), the Cheyennes believed that the sweatlodge originated with the bison and that its structure represented the animal's backbone. Another kind of sweatlodge is linked to conjuring, called *nisimatozom* or *mxeeom* in Cheyenne, where spirits are called upon to assist in healing or to advise on weighty issues (Schlesier 1987:58-59).[16] Today, sweatlodges are held for many different purposes from healing the sick to preparing for a convocation where weighty educational and political issues are deliberated. In general, any modern undertaking that requires some form of spiritual assistance, intervention, and renewal is likely to be accompanied by sweatlodge observances (Moore, J. 1996:234-237).

The same is true for the Lakotas. In the Lakota language, the word for a sweatlodge, is *initipi* [the lodge of breath]; the observance itself is called *inipi* or *inikagapi*, which means respectively "to live again" and "to make breath" (Medicine 1987:167; Black Elk, W. and Lyon 1980:61; Bucko 1999:123). The sweatlodge, often described as the ribs or womb of *Maka Ina*, brings the spiritual and physical together and mimics the process of conception and birth (St. Pierre and Long Soldier 1995:48; Bucko 1999:63, 76, 85, 148-149, 197, 199, 210, 211). One of Raymond Bucko's Lakota advisors told him:

> The rocks go into the lodge, and we enter into *uçi makhá*'s belly. In the womb of the mother, you can ask the father for anything. The breath of the rocks allows us to leave in there the old and come out with the new. This is the place of connection between heaven and earth; this connects us to *makhá* and *tobtób*, the sixteen spirits. We don't know their names. The lodge is about relationship: commerce and development; our duties as mothers and fathers; relationship to the stars and burial places--you have a place to go when you die. We also need to understand the star formations, so that we know where we need to go. My grandmother

[16] This comes closest to the sweatlodges associated with *Yuwipi* among the Lakotas.

> says they used to go to the Black Hills to read the prophecy walls, so that we will know what will happen that year (Bucko 1999:199).

Among the Lakotas, the *Inipi* is used to strengthen and renew a person in the course of healing or in preparation for ceremonies, communal hunts, and warfare, and its many functions and purposes are described in great detail by Raymond Bucko (1999) and others (Powers, W. 1977:52; Black Elk in Brown 1971:31-43; Black Elk in DeMallie 1984:82-84 *et seq.*; Medicine 1987:16; Black Elk, W. and Lyon 1990:87-86; Black Elk, W. and Lyon 1990:67-86; Catches, Sr. and Catches 1990:77-91; Feraca 1998:32-35; Bucko 1999:123).

Sweatlodges or "sweats," as they are often referred to in English, are one of the spiritual observances Lakotas have conducted at Wind Cave National Park (Terry 1999, personal communication; Albers and Kittelson 2002). The remains of some of the lodges are still evident on park properties (South Dakota Archaeological Research Center, CU-900). There are a number of different reasons why the park might be chosen to hold sweatlodge observances, and many of these are revealed in more depth through the materials presented in Chapter Fifteen. But a few points can be made here. First, Wind Cave and caves in general are intimately associated with the relationships between bison, the breath of life, renewal, and rebirth (see discussion in Part II of this chapter). The sweatlodge structure, often described as the backbone, ribs, or womb of *Maka Ina* [Mother Earth], brings the spiritual and physical together and mimics the process which creates the breath of life, widely understood by both the Cheyennes and the Lakotas as originating in caves (Black Elk, W. and Lyon 1990:70; St. Pierre and Long Soldier 1995:48; Bucko 1999:76, 85, 148-149). Wallace Black Elk (and Lyon 1990:70) points out that sweatlodges are "homes to the 'stone people' that contain all the elements that form the human structure," including the spark, which is the little soul or *nagila*. This connection is also made explicit, according to Raymond Bucko (1999:148-149), in accounts of the birth of the culture hero Blood Clot Boy, who is born in a sweatlodge from a bison cow's blood clot, which is given life when a badger pours water on the clot, causing steam to rise from the rocks and imparting *ni* [breath] to the boy, and it is also apparent in various Stone Boy stories (Bucko 1999:150-154).

Like the sweatlodge, Wind Cave and other caves in the Hills are understood to be birthing chambers where animals, particularly bison, undergo the process of materialization that is signified by the presence of *ni* or breath. The first Lakota man to emerge from Wind Cave, *Tokahe*, is associated with the introduction of the sweatlodge to humans as a means of treating illnesses caused by small water spirits, called *mini watu* (Walker 1983:375). The Cheyennes connect an unidentified cave in the southern Hills with the travels of their culture hero, Sweet Medicine, who performed a sweatlodge ceremony at this location and brought humans back to life (Schlesier 1987:79). George Bird Grinnell (1972:2:135-136) gives another account of the origin of a Cheyenne pipe ceremony used in healing that is also associated with a cave, although the specific location of this subterranean locale is unreported. Finally, Wawoslata (in Stars, Iron Shell, and Buechel 1978:264-269; Buechel and Manhart 1998:452-463) told about a *Yuwipi* sweatlodge that was held at an unidentified location along the Race Track sometime in the nineteenth century.

3. Beholding the Sacred

The spirit world can reveal its presence to humans in many different ways. It may make its appearance in dreams or unusual events and visitations without being petitioned. Often people who are singled out for special spiritual callings are approached in this way. When someone has been spiritually "called" without solicitation, s/he seeks further encounters to gain the necessary knowledge in order to learn how to use their spiritual gifts. This typically takes place under the supervision of a spiritually experienced intercessor in the context of observances variously called

"fasting," "vision questing," or "dream seeking." Whether people have a prior spiritual "awakening" or not, there are conventional steps that need to be followed to reach an awareness of what their spiritual knowledge means for them. There is an extensive literature on this subject for the Lakotas (Walker 1917:66-71; Densmore 1918:172-203; Hassrick 1964:231-237; Powers, W. 1977:61-63, 91-93, 137-139, 184-185; Black Elk in Brown 1971:44-66; Sword in Walker 1980: 84-86, 99; Tyon, Garnett, Thunder Bear and Sword in Walker 1980:104-105; Tyon in Walker 1980:119, 150-153; Thunder Bear in Walker 1980:129-135; Black Elk, N. in DeMallie 1984:83-110, De Mallie 1987:34-40; Amiotte 1989b:206-231; Black Elk, W. and Lyon 1990:73-74, 120-137; Catches, Sr. and Catches 1990:27-36; Lewis, T. 1990:49-51; St. Pierre and Long Soldier 1995:28, 30, 135-136; Feraca 1998:23-29), and a more modest body of writings on the Cheyennes (Curtis 1907-30:6:123; Stands in Timber and Liberty 1967:89-90; Grinnell 1972:2:80, 83-85; Moore, J. 1996:212, 231-232). It does not need to be reviewed here, except to make a few general points.

The process of seeking spiritual awareness through visions and dreams can take many forms. Typically, it involves seeking an isolated location on some eminence where the landscape is visible in all four directions. Specially built pits or holes are prepared in the earth, often not dissimilar to those constructed for eagle trapping. Here the supplicant fasts, prays, makes offerings, and awaits a spiritual visitation. Once a spirit has made its presence and gifts known, the supplicant shares the experience with a mentor who interprets its meaning and instructs the person on what must be done to "honor" the knowledge. Spiritually gifted people commonly *hanbleciya* [seek a dream] on a recurring basis to renew old spiritual partnerships or gain new ones (Black Elk in DeMallie 1984; Fools Crow in Mails 1979; Feraca 1998:27).

In contrast to Bear Butte and Harney Peak, widely understood as locations to seek visions, there is little evidence in the published literature, other than a remark by James LaPointe (1976:79-80) that identifies or even suggests that Wind Cave National Park is a place where Lakotas typically go to fast, pray, and seek visions. As mentioned before, there are references to caves being sites for visionary experiences, but it is more typical for Lakotas and Cheyennes to use high elevation, conical shaped buttes or mountain peaks with an unobstructed view in four directions for this purpose. Some of the higher elevation sites in the area that might meet this specification, including Battle Mountain to the south and Mount Coolidge to the north, are outside the boundaries of the park. Inside the park, Rankin Ridge and Elk Mountain may have been used for vision seeking, and both appear to conform to some of the conventional properties of preferred vision seeking sites. Today, however, these locations have undergone extensive development, and they appear to lack the solitude necessary for religious observances of this order. Nonetheless, several cultural preservation officers from different Cheyenne and Lakota tribes identified the general area of the park with prayer and fasting (Albers and Kittelson 2002).

Not all vision seekers search out the highest peaks for fasting and prayer, however. After all, Sitting Bull is reported to have had a life-defining vision near a spring now inundated by Sylvan Lake (Vestal 1932:73), and there are many historic and modern examples of visionary dreams taking place inside caves (Parkman in Feltskog 1969:156-157; Bucko 1999:172-173, 184-185). In fact, Wind Cave is located on the side of a mountain (Elk Mountain to be exact) and this is significant because stories of visionary origin among Lakotas, Cheyennes, and Arapahos are commonly associated with caves inside mountains or buttes, locations that directly juxtapose earth and sky spaces.

4. Renewing the Sacred

Beyond the fundamental acts of praying, undergoing spiritual cleansing in a sweatlodge, fasting, and seeking dreams, there are many other ways in which the Lakotas and Cheyennes make contact with and renew that which is sacred.

a. Renewing Life for People

As described earlier, Lakota and Cheyenne spiritual intercessors enter into relationships with the sacred through their knowledge of symbols capable of evoking a particular spiritual presence. In doing this, they are able to perform different forms of healing (usually specific to the spiritual partners with whom they have a relationship), attract specific kinds of game (again specific to their spiritual partners), confer protection and ward off danger, and/or predict the outcome of future events. Individually and collectively, spiritually gifted men and women are able to advance the well-being of their people through innumerable acts of ritual observance that vary both within and across tribes. Some of this has already been described in the discussion on the characteristics of human encounters with spirit animals, and many of the specific details of these encounters are included in materials presented in Appendix A. A few points, by way of a summary, need to be made here as well.

The imitation of animal partners and their powers was performed in special ceremonial dances organized by the devotees of a particular spirit. Among the Lakotas, *Heyoka* [contrary], *mato* [bear], *tatanka* [bison], *sunkamanitou* [wolf], *hehaka* [elk], and *winyan Nupapika* [double woman] *inhanblapi/kagapi* [dreamers/imitators] formed loosely knit associations and held their own rituals on a recurring basis (Wissler 1912:81-99; Densmore 1918:284-310). Such performances were very common among the Lakotas in historic times, but since the late nineteenth century, these have largely disappeared, even though people still have spiritual partnerships with the Thunders and various animal spirits. These kinds of dreamers apparently formed dance associations among the Cheyennes as well (Hayden 1862:280-282; Anderson, R. 1956:93), but by the early twentieth century, their performances took place primarily within the context of the *Massaum* [Animal Dance] (Moore, J. 1996:237-238).

Of particular importance, given the association between bison and caves, are the performances of the *Tatanka Ihanblapi* [Bison Dreamers] in Lakota (Wissler 1912:91) and *Isiwunhetániu* [Buffalo Men] in Cheyenne (Anderson, R. 1956 1956:93). Among the Lakotas, these men often served as "buffalo callers," and they were the ones who presided over communal bison hunts (Curtis 1907-30:3:63, 139; Densmore 1918:285; Hassrick 1964:144, 187, 239, 253, 310-311; Standing Bear 1978:141-142; Black Elk in DeMallie 1984:7, 88-89, 240-241). They were strongly connected to healing and herbal medicine, and they served as spiritual intercessors for a number of major ceremonies. One well-known story entitled *Tatanka kagapi kin* [Making Buffalo] and told in Chapter Fifteen, took place inside the Buffalo Gap at *Tatanka makalhpaya* [The Stomping Grounds of the Bison Bull] (Lone Wolf in Stars, Iron Shell and Buechel 1978: 242-245); it describes a mysterious event associated with the transmogrification of a bison bull into a human. Among other things, this story reveals the seamless and fluid nature of spiritual connections between bison and humans, but it also demonstrates the power of certain animals and humans to reveal themselves in other forms.

Similarly, the Cheyennes depended upon Buffalo Men in "calling" the bison and in healing (Grinnell 1919; Anderson, R. 1956 1956:100-101; Powell 1969:1:324-327, 341, 343, 344, 388, 408; Grinnell 1972:1:196, 151; Marquis and Limbaugh 1973:34; Schlesier 1987:15-16, 52-58).

Many stories in Cheyenne traditions tell of the emergence of bison from springs and caves in association with their culture heroes, *Motseyoef* [Sweet Medicine] and *Tomosivsi* [Erect Horn/Stands on the Ground]. Most of the stories associated with Sweet Medicine are linked to a springs and a cave at Bear Butte (Kroeber 1900:179-181; Dorsey, G. 1905:41-45; Grinnell 1908: 170-178, 1926:244-252, 263-280; Stands in Timber 1967:27-41; Powell 1969:2:460-466; Moore, J. 1987:103-105), while those connected with Stands on the Ground are associated with a cave and spring at the Sutaio's sacred place, the "Black Mountain"[17] (Kroeber 1900:163; Dorsey, G. 1905:39-41, 46-59; Grinnell 1908:179-194, 1926:257-262; Powell 1969:2:467-471, 871-872). Both of these culture heroes are linked to the introduction of sweatlodge ceremonies among the Cheyennes, but Stands on the Ground and the Sutaio division of the tribe are explicitly connected to the Buffalo Men and their lodge or ceremony (Grinnell 1919; Anderson, R. 1956 1956), which in turn is connected to the Buffalo Gap, the Great Race, and the first Sun Dance (Powell 1969:2: 472-478). In the Buffalo Lodge, a man would dedicate a ceremony on behalf of a sick child or relative. Under the direction of an intercessor, he took the role of a bull; his wife, a cow; and his child, a yellow calf (Grinnell 1919:361). Much of the ritual associated with this paralleled sweat-lodge practices in ceremonies linked to the Sacred Hat and the *Massaum* (Anderson, R. 1956:95, 98). In the original rite, a tipi was set up in the midst of a bison herd. A young virgin sat inside wrapped in a bison robe, and an intercessor walked towards the bison with a pipe singing a song that called the bison to him. When the buffalo approached, the hunters ran around the herd and drove them to a spot where they were killed. From the first animal killed, a piece of fat was extracted and given to the virgin who covered it with her robe (Ibid:100).

b. Renewing Relationships

Many of the ritual observances that spiritually gifted people led were held to renew different kinds of relationships either among the membership of a single tribe or across tribal boundaries. The Lakota *Pte San Lowanpi*[18] and *Tapa Wanka Yap* [Throwing of the Ball], for example, can both be seen as ceremonies that promote the fertility and fecundity of women, thereby renewing relations across generations (Walker 1917:141-151; Densmore 1918:63-67; Black Elk in Brown 1971:116-138; Powers, W. 1977:101-103; Powers, M. 1986:66-72). One story of the origin of this ceremony takes place in a cave (No Flesh in Walker 1980:193-194). The *Hunkapi* [Making Relatives] is an adoption ceremony, which takes place to cement ties between families, including those of different tribes (Walker 1917:122-140; Densmore 1918:68-76; Black Elk in Brown 1971: 101-116; Powers, W. 1977:100-101; Thunder Tail in Stars, Iron Shell, and Buechel 1978:222-234 [also in Buechel and Manhart 1998:384-403]). One story about its origin is also associated with a

[17] There are various interpretations of where the Black Mountain is located (Powell 1969:2:469n4). In some stories, it appears to designate the Black Hills not only because many of the stories connected with *Tomosivsi* end up being related to the Race Track, the Buffalo Gap, and the Sun Dance but also because the narrative of *Is'siwun* (The Sacred Hat) explicitly refers to "the beautiful river," an expression often reserved for the Cheyenne River. Reverend Peter Powell (1969:2:469n4) indicates that some Cheyennes claim that the Sutaios' Black Mountain refers to the Timber Mountains north of the Pipestone Quarry in Minnesota. The only possible Hills that meet this description are near present day Milbank, South Dakota. If the story was transported and replanted in the Black Hills, as many narratives seem to have been, then these might refer to the Sutaios' "Black Mountain" as well. As Powell (1969:2:870-871) argues, there are significant differences between the Northern and Southern Cheyennes in the ways the stories of Erect Horns are told and the locations where they are purported to have taken place. Some of the stories appear to be located in different sorts of environments, suggesting that they were adapted to new landscapes as the Cheyennes migrated from areas east of the Missouri River to the Black Hills.

[18] This ceremony goes by several different names including *Tatanka Lowanpi* [Bison Bull Sing], *Tona Ta Awi Cha Lowanpi* [They Sing Over Her Seclusion], and *Isnati Lowanpi* [Seclusion Sing]. *Isnati* refers to the ritual practice where women were secluded during their menstruation to protect themselves and others from the *ton* or powerful spiritual essence associated with this event.

cave (Little Wound in Walker 1980:196) The *Wanagi Yuhapi* [Spirit Keeping Ceremony] serves to renew the cycle of life by embracing, then breaking, ties with the deceased to permit their safe passage to the spirit world (Densmore 1918:77-83; Black Elk in Brown 1971:10-30; Powers, W. 1977:93-95). As discussed previously, Lakotas were reported to bury the white buffalo skins used in these ceremonies in caves (Curtis 1907-30:3:110; Densmore 1918:118). Many of the renewal ceremonies, which marked important life cycle transitions, were particularly important to the Lakotas, as they were the gift of *Pte San Winyan*, the White Buffalo Calf Woman (Black Elk in Brown 1971:3-9; Powers, M. 1986:42-52). Although many of these were no longer practiced by the middle of the twentieth century, they are now undergoing a revitalization and are conducted, albeit with some modification, by many contemporary Lakotas. While the Cheyennes also mark some of these transitions in ritual ways, they have not been emphasized and elaborated upon in the same way or to the same degree as they have been among the Lakotas (Moore, J. 1996:238-240).

In historic times, what both tribes shared were a series of ceremonial observances performed by men who were members of various soldier societies and who shared dreams of the animals that served as the guardians of these organizations (Wissler 1912:13-62; Densmore 1918:311-378; Grinnell 1972:2:48-86). Military sodalities built a sense of camaraderie and solidarity between men who fought together in battle, and many of the traditional ones fell into disuse in the early reservation era. Some, like *Tokalas* of the Lakotas, are now being revived. The origin site for this group is linked to the Black Hills, although not to the area around Wind Cave (Wissler 1912:72; Bad Heart Bull and Blish 1967:290; La Pointe 1976:54-55). The Plains Apaches also believe one of their military societies, the *Manatidae*, originated in the Black Hills, but the precise whereabouts is not documented in published sources (Schweinfurth 2002:60-66, 90, 150).

Women who belonged to war and/or quilling societies also performed shared rituals that renewed their ties in common endeavors (Wissler 1912:76, 79-80; Hassrick 1964:42-45; Grinnell 1972:1:159-167, 2:385-391; Powers, M. 1986:25-26, 73-74, 86-87, 137-139). As previously reported, the Cheyenne women's quilling society is associated with the story of the Buffalo Wife that some Cheyenne connect to the Race Track and the Buffalo Gap (Grinnell 1972:2:385-391; Stands in Timber and Liberty 1967:19-24; Powell 1969:2:472-478).

c. Renewing the Nation

Highly important to the Cheyennes were ceremonies that renewed their sacred tribal covenants, *Mashoet* [the Sacred Arrows] and *Isuwan* or *Esevone* [the Sacred Hat]. The Sacred Arrows, which stand for the well-being of the whole Cheyenne nation, is associated today with the Southern Cheyennes, while the Sacred Hat is connected to the Sutaio-Omisis divisions that make up the Northern Cheyennes. Elaborate rites of renewal are associated with these tribal covenants. The Sacred Arrow Ceremony was given to the Cheyenne people by the *Maiyun* through their prophet *Motseyoef* [Sweet Medicine] in a cave at Bear Butte (Dorsey, G. 1905:41-45; Powell 1969:2:43-46, 73-75, 89-90, 399-400). This ceremony, which serves to reunite and renew the Cheyennes as a people, takes place periodically in early summer, at which time the bundle containing the sacred arrows and other objects is opened and its contents displayed and propitiated while the story of Sweet Medicine is retold (Dorsey, G. 1905:1-12; Grinnell 1910; Powell 1969:2:481-610, 875-895; Moore, J. 1996:214-218). The Sacred Hat was brought to the tribe by *Tomosivsi* [Erect Horn/Stands on the Ground] from a spring or cave, depending on the particular story, at a place called Black Mountain, and it plays a significant role in various ceremonies connected with the bison, including the Sun Dance (Dorsey 1905:39-40, 46-49; Powell 1969:1:55-56, 283-285, 2:467-471, 807-808; Grinnell 1972:2:192, 197, 231,285, 377,

344). The Sacred Hat is also propitiated and renewed in an elaborate ceremony, in which the story of Stands on the Ground is retold (Powell 1969:1:99-100, 105-107, 326-327; Grinnell 1972:2:344-345, 368-372, 380-381). The Lakotas' sacred covenant is the White Buffalo Calf Pipe, which is periodically displayed and renewed for the well-being of the Lakota people (Densmore 1918:63-67; Black Elk in Brown 1971:3-9; Looking Horse 1987). The Pipe is supposed to have been given to the Lakota people by *Pte San Winyan* (White Buffalo Calf Woman) at Bear Lodge Butte, commonly known as Devil's Tower. Similarly, the Arapahos' sacred Pipe continues to be displayed and renewed on set ceremonial occasions (Anderson, J. 2001).

d. Renewing the Universe

The Cheyennes had two ceremonies, the *Massaum* [Animal Dance] and the *Oxheheom* [literally translated as "New Life lodge," or "Life Generator Lodge" but commonly called a "Sun Dance"], that functioned as world renewal observances. The *Massaum* was held in the Black Hills until the early twentieth century (Whiteman in Schwartz 1988:12, 69) but is no longer performed today. Its primary purpose was to recreate the evolution of the cosmos and thereby, replenish the game animals and plants on whose lives the Cheyennes depended (Schlesier 1987, see also discussions in Chapter Nine and in Appendix A). The *Oxheheom* is still practiced today among the Cheyennes in their reservation communities in Montana and Oklahoma, but it was originally performed near Sundance Mountain in Wyoming on the northwestern edge of the Black Hills (Powell 1969:2: 477). There are two early descriptions of this ceremony by George Dorsey (1905:57-177) and George Bird Grinnell (Grinnell 1972:2:211-284) and a number of accounts of more recent dances by John Stands in Timber (and Liberty 1967:99-100), Father Peter Powell (1969: 2:611-858), and John Moore (1996:219-228). Like the *Massaum*, the purpose of the *Oxheheom* is to regenerate and replenish the universe and its myriad species of plants and animals. Today it is a "celebration of cultural continuity," according to John Moore (1996:219), and also "an attempt to bring health, well-being, and harmony to the people by tapping into the energy network of *Maheo* as transported through the *Maiyun* who are represented in the dance" (Ibid: 221).

The *Oxheheom* begins in what is known as the 'Lone Tipi,'[19] which is situated outside the dance lodge and erected before the lodge is constructed. Here, the priests, the pledger, and his wife, the "sacred woman," conduct various observances, not only to cleanse, paint, and otherwise prepare the dancers and the objects used in the dance, but also to insure the success of the ceremony (Dorsey, G. 1905:91, 97, 100; Hoebel 1960:13; Powell 1969:2:614-645; Moore, J. 1996: 221). When the observances in the Lone Tipi are completed, the ritual of securing and implanting the center pole takes place. The forks of the tree, which serve as the center pole, hold the "thunderbird's nest;" it contains a wide variety of different plants and animal parts that symbolize the natural world (Moore, J. 1996:222). After the tree is implanted, the structure of the lodge is constructed with four posts representing the cardinal directions (Moore, J. 1996:222; Powell 1969:2:646-684). The altar is then built to recreate the Cheyennes' image of a prosperous universe with abundant buffalo and plants, the presence of sunshine, rainbows and good sprits, and a people with good health and the ability to vanquish their enemies (Hoebel 1960:14; Powell 1969:2:646-684). During the construction of the lodge, families pray, smoke, and make offerings

[19] The tipi is said to stand for Bear Butte (1969:2:616n2), while the lodge itself (as described in Chapter Fifteen) stands for the Black Hills. Helen Rezatto (1989:27) also writes that Bear Butte is often described as a minature replica of the Black Hills.

to *Ma'heo* and the various *maiyun* whose presence is called forth in the lodge when the dance begins (Moore, J. 1996:223).

Once the lodge is completed, the dances and sacrifices commence on the last day. The dancers are men who have made a pledge to dance, and each must have a qualified instructor to assist them (Moore, J. 1996:221). Each dancer bears objects that represent the four souls of the body, the four directions, and their corresponding whirlwinds and animals. Each dancer makes sacrifices to seek the spiritual benevolence of *Ma'heo* and his *maiyun* in order to renew the world and the lives of the people (Dorsey, G. 1905:176; Powell 1969:2:841-852; Grinnell 1972:2:211, 224). During the dance itself, the Cheyennes engage in acts of suffering and self-sacrifice, which include inserting skewers into the back and shoulders, to which rawhide ropes are tied and buffalo skulls hung. Men either drag these skulls around the dance area or dance with them in place on their backs (Dorsey 1905:176; Grinnell 1972:2:211). This and other acts of offering are intended to seek the spiritual benevolence necessary to renew the world and the lives of the people. The dance ends with a race to the four directions and the homes or pillars of the four sacred *Ma'he-yuno* (Powell 1969:2:841-852).

Although the *Oxheheom* contains a rich symbolism linked to bison and female generative powers, it is dedicated to *Ma'heo* who represents the supreme male spiritual figure in Cheyenne cosmology. John Moore (1996:225-226) depicts the ceremony as the recreation of an "enormous fertility structure" embodied in the life-giving forces of spring thunderstorms that cross the plains in spring and summer. Yet, he also argues it contains many different symbols that reveal other life-giving forces, including the earth represented by the buffalo skull at the altar and the rainbow signified by four arched sticks in front of the skull (Ibid: 227-228). When the dance is completed, the earth is regenerated, the harmony of the universe restored, and the people's health and well-being renewed (Ibid:228).

For the Lakotas, the *Winwanyan wacipi* [Sun Gazing Dance] is also their holiest religious observance for renewing the universe and their relationship to *Wakan Tanka* (Amiotte 1989c:245). Many early and modern accounts (Dorsey, J. 1894:459-467; Walker 1917:60-121; Densmore 1918:84-151; Sword in Deloria 1929; Black Elk in Brown 1971:101-116; Mails 1978; Amiotte 1989a; Feraca 1998:8-22) have described it in great detail, and again, aspects of it only need to be summarized here. It should be noted, however, that there are important differences in the performance of the dance between the southern Lakotas, about whom most of the literature on this subject has been written, and the northern Lakotas as described by Densmore (1918:84-151). Additionally, there have been significant changes in the dance over time (Feraca 1998:8-22).

In many basic ways the Lakotas' observance of the Sun Dance is very similar to the Cheyennes' from whom some scholars believe they learned it. Indeed, historical evidence and the traditions of both tribes identify Sundance Mountain in Wyoming as the location for their earliest Sun Dances (Black Elk in DeMallie 1984:366; Sundstrom, L. 1997:186, 193). Today, the Sun Dance remains the Lakotas' most significant communal ceremonial observance. Its observance includes the participation of friends from other tribes, especially Arapahos and Cheyennes. Likewise, Lakotas dance in Sun Dances held by these two tribes (Feraca 1998:12-13).

The Lakota Sun Dance takes place in the full moon of midsummer, usually in June or July. The month before the dance, those who conduct the ceremony begin making prayers and offerings to prepare for the ceremony, and those who pledge to dance work to fulfill their vows. Historically, the leaders of the tribe's military societies met to select the *Kuwa' Kiya'pi* (intercessors), the *Itan'can* (dance leader), the four male "hunters" or "scouts" who located the tree for the center pole, the four virgins who cut it down, the "digger" who prepared the hole in

which the tree rested, and many others who played special roles in the ceremony (Walker 1917:95-98; Densmore 1918:98-103). In the four days preceding the ceremony, the dancers selected the mentors who painted them,[20] feasts were held by the military societies, and the virginal female relatives of the dancers underwent the test of biting the snake or knife[21] (Walker 1917:98-101; Densmore 1918:104-105). While the southern Lakotas used one lodge to prepare all their dancers, the northern Lakotas had a sweatlodge for each of the participating bands (Densmore 1918:98; Mails 1978:85-96).[22]

On the first day of the ceremony, the grounds where the dance is held are located, staked, and sanctified, and the Sun Trail (or Sun Path) surrounding the dance area marked off (Walker 1917:100-101). This is followed by the preparation of the Sun Dance altar, *owanka wakan*, where the vegetation is removed and the ground finely pulverized. Lines are traced around the altar and then two intersecting lines are made to create a cross. These are filled with tobacco, red paint, and gypsum, and eagle down is placed where the lines end and intersect. A bed of sage is laid down to the west of this altar where the bison skull rests (Densmore 1918:122; Powers, W. 1977:96; Amiotte 1989a:250-251). The digger also prepares the hole on this day for the placement of the center pole or sacred tree, where offerings of water, bison blood, tobacco, and *wasna* are placed (Catches, Sr. and Catches 1990:112). Once the altar is completed, the lodge maker and his assistants construct the arbor or shade, [*iyohanziglepi*] around the outer edge of the dance circle (Walker 1917:102; Densmore 1918:118-123; Powers, W. 1977:96).

On the second day, the sacred tree is located by the scouts and felled by four virgins, mimicking an attack on an enemy. It is carefully peeled and trimmed, leaving the top forked branches in place, and then it is carried back to camp by a procession of twenty men singing victory songs. Upon returning to the camp, the men race against each other to the center hole to win the honor of carrying a special banner into the circle when the pole is raised (Walker 1917:100-105; Densmore 1918:111-116; Sword in Deloria 1929: 394-398; Powers, W. 1977:97).

On the third day, the tree is brought into the center of the dance circle where it is painted by the intercessor and a bundle of offerings are hung on a cottonwood crossbar placed in the tree's fork. As with the Cheyennes, this bundle represents the thunderbird's nest (Feraca 1998:17). The tree is then planted in its hole in the ground and earth is packed around it to keep it in place. While the tree is raised, the story of creation is retold, how the four winds came to be, how humans emerged from the underworld, and how the sacred pipe was brought to the people (Amiotte 1989a:249-252). It is during this part of the ceremony that families are told to bring their offerings into the enclosure. Following the tree raising, the men dance towards the tree and shoot at the effigies of a bison and an enemy hung on its branches. This is followed by parades and celebration (Walker 1917:106-111; Densmore 1918:117-122; Powers, W. 1977:98).

The pledgers who participate in the dance do so in different ways, although all are required to fast. There are dancers who simply dance, the ones who lacerate the flesh in small ways, and those who have skewers put through their skin, either by piercing the chest and being suspended

[20] Francis Densmore's Sun Dance material was based on information she learned from northern Lakota consultants. Among the southern divisions, the Oglalas and Sicangus, the selection of a mentor appears to have taken place many months before the dance and required the participants to seek their visions prior to the ceremony and receive training from their mentors in other ways (Walker 1917:63-66).

[21] In order for a woman to give support to her relative by dancing with him in the sacred enclosure, she had to make a public declaration of her chastity by biting a knife or a snakeskin.

[22] Thomas Mails (1978:95) suggests that the differences in the number of sweatlodges may be a function of the number of dancers who participate in a ceremony.

by ropes hung to the center pole or by fastening buffalo skulls to ropes which are tied to skewers inserted into their back and arms. There are also other and more severe variations of piercing (Walker 1917:61-62; Densmore 1918:131-135; Powers, W. 1977:98-99). Women who participate also fast, dance, and sometimes have small pieces of flesh cut from their upper arms (Densmore 1918:132,135). During the dance, children's ears are pierced too (Walker 1917:115-116; Densmore 1918:137-138).

In the first morning of the dance, the dancers eat a morning meal and enter their respective sweatlodges where they are dressed and their bodies painted by the men who have been chosen to be their mentors (Densmore 1918:123-126). This is considered a joyful day as the people prepare themselves to appear before the Sun (Walker 1917:111). When the ceremony is about to begin, the Crier goes around the camp to summon the dancers and their mentors, who follow the Intercessors into the camp circle. The Dance Leader walks into the circle next to the Intercessors, carrying the buffalo skull. As the skull is placed on its bed of sage, the Intercessor burns sweet grass and lights the pipe praying to the sky, the earth, and the four directions (Ibid:126-127). The opening dance is accompanied by gift giving among the people assembled, with many showing "respect" in this way to the dancers' families (Ibid:129).

Once the ceremony begins, the participants dance continuously with brief intervals for rest, and each takes a turn undergoing the form of piercing h/she has pledged. According to James Walker (1917:114-115), two kinds of dances, the Buffalo and Sun-Gaze, are performed during the ceremony. In the Buffalo dance, dancers who are hunters/warriors capture the dancers playing the role of bison/enemies. The hunter/warriors then pierce the captives according to the particular vows they made prior to the ceremony. After the capture and piercing, the Sun-Gaze dance begins and continues while the captives attempt to break their skin loose from the ropes suspended to the center pole or fastened to bison skulls. The captive dancers are freed when they break their bonds (Walker 1917:116-118; Powers, W. 1977:99-100). Once they are released, the Scalp-Staff Dance is performed with the participation of the women. After its completion, the ceremony is concluded (Walker 1917:119-120).

The Lakota Sun Dance also contains an elaborate symbolism. Much of it is linked to male generative power, as embodied in the figures of *Tatanka* [Bison Bull] and *Wi* [Sun], but *Pte San Winyan* [White Buffalo Calf Woman] also occupies an honored position in this observance. In many ways, Lakota Sun Dance observances recreate the lifecycle of the bison and the movements these animals once followed in their yearly migrations along the sun's path or trail (Looking Horse in Parlow 1983a:42-43). Here the bison serves as an overarching metaphor of life and its continuity, and the symbol through which humans are able to renew the world and their own humble place within it (Amiotte 1987:78).

The Lakotas do not appear to have had a ceremony equivalent to the Cheyennes' *Massaum*, although their recently described religious pilgrimage into the central regions of the Black Hills to perform a spring renewal ceremony, called *Okisataya wowahwala*, appears to have objectives that parallel the *Massaum* (Goodman 1992:8, 13,16). The Lakotas also continue to hold pipe ceremonies at the Buffalo Gap and the general region of Wind Cave National Park to celebrate the arrival of the vernal equinox and the beginnings of a new cycle of rebirth, and they observe another ceremony near Harney Peak to mark the arrival of the Thunders later in the spring (Black Elk, C. in Goodman 1992:50; Albers and Kittelson Interviews 2002). Historically at least, all of these ceremonies were held in preparation for the observance of the Sun Dance after the summer solstice (Black Elk, C.: ibid).

III. WIND CAVE NATIONAL PARK AS A SACRED PLACE

The original Sun Dance, as first performed by the bison before they turned it over to humans, is explicitly associated in some Cheyenne traditions with the Buffalo Gap. Some Cheyennes also believe that many aspects of their Sun Dance recreate the story of the Great Race, which took place in the Red Valley or Race Track of the Black Hills (Stands in Timber and Liberty 1967:23; Powell 1969:2:472-478; Whiteman in Schwartz 1988:72). The Sun Dance is held within a circular enclosure,which like the Race Track's opening at the Buffalo Gap, faces east. Ralph White Tail told Father Peter Powell (1969:2:475n5) that the red and black painted rafters[23] in the Cheyenne Sun Dance lodge represent the painted sticks the racers carried when they ran around the Hills. Powell (Ibid:2:476n6) reports that during the final dance of the ceremony, the instructor pushes the pledger against the cottonwood brush surrounding the altar, reenacting the efforts of the buffalo to drive the human runner over a cliff along the Race Track, and he also notes, probably not coincidentally, that at the end of the ceremony the dancers imitate the "Great Race," by circling the center pole several times (Ibid:852). Powell (Ibid:473n2) further mentions that the arrow pierced through the meat and placed as an offering in the nest of the Thunderbird signifies the injury endured by the Buffalo Woman who brought a human man to her people, the buffalo, who then challenged him to race against them. In addition, he notes that the Lone Tipi, where the initial preparations for the Sun Dance take place, stands simultaneously for Bear Butte and also the lone lodge in which the Buffalo wife lived in the Great Race Story (Ibid:616n2). Finally, John Stands in Timber (and Liberty 1967:24) points out that the clay figurines of animals that children once placed around the center pole represent the animals that competed in the Great Race.[24]

There are other possible metaphoric allusions to the Great Race story not mentioned by Powell or Stands in Timber. Some of the painted dancers in the Sun Dance, notably the Swift Hawk and Deer, are singled out as major racers in various Cheyenne versions of the story (Powell 1969:2:612, 806, 832, 838, 848-849, 851). One could also argue that when the dancers drag the skulls of the buffalo on their back, pierce their chests and suspend themselves from the sacred tree, they are sacrificing themselves and shedding their blood, both literally and figuratively, as the buffalo and other animals did when they careened around the Black Hills forming the Red Valley with its blood-soaked soil so that humans became the predators and the bison their prey.

In one Cheyenne story of the Race Track, the gypsum formations commonly found along its reaches are described as the remains of the froth issuing from the lead bison's mouth as she raced (Marquis and Limbaugh 1973:30-31). In their Sun Dance, the Cheyenne marked their altar and painted many of its sacred objects with burnt gypsum (Grinnell 1972:1:163, 192, 2, pp. 202, 242, 262; Schlesier 1987:93; Whiteman in Schwartz 1988:54). Another Cheyenne name for gypsum is "Sun Arrow" (Grinnell 1926:179). The connection with gypsum[25] also appears in Densmore's description (1918:122) of the Lakota Sun Dance, in which the line around their altar is filled with tobacco (bearberry), red paint, and then gypsum. The placement of the gypsum on red paint mirrors the way this mineral is embedded in the limestone and red clay beds that make up the Race Track (Newton and Jenney 1880:134-135), and bearberry is a plant that is found in the Black Hills but not in the surrounding grasslands.

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[23] This mimics the coloration of the rock formations straddling the Red Valley, the purple colored limestones towards the center of the Hills and the red hued formations along the Hogback (see Newton and Jenney 1880:132).

[24] George Dorsey (1905:49) reports the presence of these figurines too but argues that they represent the animals that Sweet Medicine and Stands on the Ground brought out of a spring.

[25] She uses the term "mica" here but she is probably talking about gypsum. Lakotas and Cheyennes loosely refer to gypsum as "mica" (Moore, J. 1996:67).

The Lakotas and Cheyennes both have a thunderbird's nest in their Sun Dance that sits atop the sacred tree, surrounded by a larger sacred circle within which the dancers dance, a relation mirroring the geographic position of Harney Peak, widely associated with the nest of Thunderbirds and eagles, in relation to the surrounding Race Track (Hinman 1874:95; Curtis in Krause and Olson 1974:150, 152; Eagle Elk in Erdoes 1976:33-36; Bordeaux in Kadlecek and Kadlecek 1981:90-91; Lame Deer in Erdoes and Ortiz 1984:93-95; Black Elk, C. 1992a:51). Indeed, the association of the Hills' high elevation interiors with the thunders recalls John Moore's apt description (1996:225-226) of the Cheyenne Sun Dance as a recreation of an "enormous fertility structure" that makes up a spring thunderstorm on the plains. The base of the tree is placed in a ritually prepared hole that is fed with buffalo fat and other offerings. The tree, as an *axis mundi*, ties the two together in a manner not dissimilar to the way these tribes understand the relationship between the high reaches and underground recesses of the Black Hills. The tree channels the thunders' powers to the hole (cave) in the earth where life is regenerated.

There is yet another connection to this region. Joseph Eppes Brown (1992:102-103) writes that, among the Lakotas, men's robes were typically fabricated from the hides of bulls and embellished with quilled "sun-burst" designs, signifying sunflowers, which symbolized male fertility. When Sun Dancers followed the sun in their movements, they were imitating the way the sunflower turns towards the sun (Standing Bear 1975:120). In Lakota and Cheyenne traditions, porcupine quills, like the tail feathers of eagles, are believed to hold the *ton* of the sun, and among the Cheyennes, the founding of their quillworkers guild, *Me e no'ist st*, is connected to some of the stories of the Great Race and the Buffalo Gap (Stands in Timber and Liberty 1967:19-24; Powell 1969:2:472-477; Grinnell 1972:1:163-164, 2:385-391). The yellow hair of newly born bison also contains the sun's essence, and along with porcupine quills and the tailfeathers of eagles, they symbolize the "breath of life" (Moore, J. 1974:163).

In Lakota traditions, the sun is a special friend of the bison whose annual movements follow the sun's path, and this trail is believed to encircle the Hills and mirror a celestial star circle (Looking Horse in Parlow 1983:42-43). Historically, the Lakotas held certain ceremonies in different parts of the Hills to mark the sun's movements from the time of the vernal equinox until after the summer solstice, and today, many of these observances are being reinstituted. In many Cheyenne and Lakota traditions, the Buffalo Gap is where the Great Race is believed to have started, and it is here that Lakotas hold pipe ceremonies to a light the sacred fire that renews, as the sun does, a new cycle of birth and growth. When the sun begins to rise higher in the sky, triggering regeneration through the heat of its rays, the Lakotas respectfully celebrate this event by lighting their own sacred fires. Importantly, this event is tied to the season when bison are born and given the breath of life through the interactions of the sun, stone, and water.

It is also not coincidental that the Race Track story is sometimes preceded by a story involving a marriage between a human man and a subterranean buffalo woman. In Cheyenne and Lakota stories relating to the area, it is her people, the buffalo, who turn the Sun Dance over to humans (Walker 1917:212-215; Stands in Timber and Liberty 1967:19-24; Powell 1969:2:472-478). Indeed, in one Lakota story of the Sun Dance's origin, the buffalo woman and her people inhabit a cave (Left Heron in Walker 1917:212-215). Although many of the most famous stories about the early performances of the Sun Dance take place at sites on the northern end of the Hills, notably near Sundance Mountain, the fact remains that several traditions point to the Buffalo Gap/Wind Cave area as the setting for the Sundance's origins among the bison and the site of its original transfer to humans. In fact, Olivia Pourier (in Neihardt and Utecht 2000:135) recalled her

grandfather, Nicholas Black Elk, telling of Sun Dances held in the southeastern Hills near Smithwick, South Dakota, a town not far from the Buffalo Gap.

At different times in the past twenty-five years, Lakotas have held Sun Dances at Wind Cave National Park (Terry 1999, Personal Communication; Albers & Kittelson 2002). Nothing about the Sun Dances held here has appeared in the published literature, nor has anything been written about what motivated some Lakotas to chose this site for their most sacred ceremonial observance. It may have been based on traditions that this is the area where the bison performed the dance and turned its teachings over to humans, or it may have originated in a recent vision that instructed a Sun Dance leader to hold one at this location. Whether the inspiration is old or new, the decision is certainly in keeping with Lakota and Cheyenne understandings of the area and the workings of that which is sacred. Given its long association with the Race Track and bison/human relations, Wind Cave National Park encompasses an area that is sacred in the eyes of contemporary Lakotas, Cheyennes, and perhaps other tribal nations as well (see Chapters Fourteen and Fifteen for a fuller discussion of this). Indeed, several Lakota and Cheyenne cultural resource officers singled out the Race Track as a significant sacred site. The cultural officer of the Rosebud Sioux Tribe noted that everything that is close to it is sacred and requires some sort of protection (Albers and Kittelson 2002).

Besides the Sun Dance, there are other religious observances that have ties to this area as well. Most of these associations, however, are more abstract and generic. The most important one is the link between what happens in caves and what takes place in Lakota and Cheyenne sweatlodges. Caves and sweatlodges are sacred because both embody processes that revivify the breath of life. The Cheyennes believe that caves throughout the Black Hills are the spiritual homes of the animals, the places where they undergo materialization before appearing on the earth's surface. One cave in the southern Black Hills, whose identity is not specified, is the location where their culture hero, Sweet Medicine brought people back to life in a sweatlodge ceremony. The Lakota culture hero, *Tokahe*, who led people to the earth's surface through the opening at Wind Cave, is also associated with the introduction of sweatlodges for healing. Many stories of the journeys of earlier culture heroes, Fallen Star and Stone Boy, are implicitly or explicitly tied to this area and/or the nearby Buffalo Gap. Some of these narratives also speak to the origins of the sweatlodge, and a few tell of the beginnings of bison pounds (a structure of which is mirrored in Animal and Sun Dance lodges and also in the circular configuration of the Black Hills (Sundstrom, L. 2000). These stories, together with those about miraculous happenings that took place on the "Stomping Grounds of the Bison Bull," which represents the entire area near the Buffalo Gap, link park lands to any of a variety of religious observances that relate to healing and renewal, but especially to those associated with bison (see Section Four for details). Contemporary requests to hold sweatlodges and pipe ceremonies on park lands are certainly consistent with wider Lakota and Cheyenne understandings of the area, and indeed, a few tribal cultural resource officers from Lakota tribes specifically connect this area to these observances (Albers and Kittelson 2002).

There are also other religious observances whose origins are connected to visionary experiences that take place in caves. Many of these are no longer practiced, nor are they specifically identified with the Wind Cave/Buffalo Gap region of the Black Hills. One religious observance that has continued into modern times, the vision quest, typically occurs on high mountains and buttes with unobstructed vistas in all directions. Except for Elk Mountain and sections of Rankin Ridge, there appear to be no other locations on park properties that conform to typical vision questing sites. Although these sites may have been used in the past for seeking

visions, there is nothing in the published record[26] that suggests that these are, or were, preferred places to seek spiritual partnerships in visions or dreams. Even if they had been used for these purposes in the past, they may no longer be desirable for this purpose because of the developments surrounding them, including communication towers, roads, and campsites. In relation to other sites in the Black Hills, notably Harney Peak and Bear Butte, which are widely recognized as major vision seeking locales, Lakotas and Cheyennes have expressed deep concerns about how the development of these areas has interfered with their ability to conduct their religious observances (Schlesier 1974; Forbes-Boyte 1996, 1999). Indeed, some Lakotas have even suggested that these sites are losing their spiritual power because the spirits are abandoning them behind all the tourist traffic (Eagle Elk in Erdoes 1976:33-36; Forbes-Boyte 1996:112). Vision seeking and many other religious performances require places of solitude, not only because these are necessary to the conduct of a particular observance but also because the spirits dislike unnecessary and disrespectful activity taking place at the sites they frequent. Nevertheless, several Cheyenne and Lakota cultural resource officers specifically identified the general park area as a place for prayer and fasting (Albers and Kittelson 2002).

Historically, vision seeking appears to have taken place inside certain caves, or, at the very least, people were transported to caves in their visions. Often, these caves are located inside mountains because of the powerful effects created at these locations through the juxtaposition of earth and sky spaces. There are no reports of other ceremonial observances being conducted inside caves, but there is a great deal of evidence of ceremonies being practiced in areas where caves are located. The Standing Rock Sioux culture resource officer indicated that areas on the mountain above Wind Cave have been used in modern times for ceremonial observances. Informally, some of us have been told by Lakotas that people frequently see spirits or hear them talking when they tour Wind Cave, and this was also reported by some of the cultural resource officers we interviewed (Albers and Kittelson 2002). Subterranean locations, including the interiors of caves, are sometimes avoided because they are understood as places where spirits dwell. Entering them unnecessarily and without invitation constitutes a form of trespass that may have dire conesquences (Albers 1966-1976). Catherine Stabler's remarks (in Bohi 1962:301) about Lakotas refusing to enter Wind Cave in the 1890s and "singing" when they did so reveals the respect they held for this place.

Today, Wind Cave National Park remains a location for the conduct of traditional religious observances and a site associated with many sacred stories and the origins of important ceremonies. Although many tribal observances are no longer undertaken at the places where they are believed to have originated in the Hills, these locations are still considered highly sacred in the minds of the Cheyennes and Lakotas because they are the sites where important spiritual figures dwell, where humans received sacred knowledge, and where other mysterious occurrences took place. The area around Wind Cave and the Buffalo Gap, as argued in Chapters Fourteen and Fifteen, is associated with a set of narratives that both distinguish and connect this area to stories of other highly revered landscapes in the Black Hills, notably, Harney Peak, Reynolds Prairie, Bear Butte, Bear Lodge Butte, Inyan Kara Mountain, and Castle Rock. Together, these places constitute a single overriding unity, that is the Black Hills, the center of the Lakota and Cheyenne universe.

[26] For reasons elaborated upon elsewhere in this report, the absence of references in the published literature neither confirms nor disconfirms the sacredness of a site or the performance of religious observances at a particular locale. Sacred locations are often kept secret not only out of respect for the spiritual character of a place, but also out of fear that its "discovery" by outsiders will compromise, and even destroy, the site.